THE POST-SOVIET VOTER: EVIDENCE FROM THE CAUCASUS

By

Rafael Oganesyan

Bachelor of Arts – Economics
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2008

Bachelor of Arts – Political Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2010

Master of Arts- Political Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2014

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy – Political Science

Department of Political Science
College of Liberal Arts
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2019

UNLV | GRADUATE COLLEGE

Dissertation Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

June 20, 2019

This dissertation prepared by

Rafael Oganesyan

entitled

The Post-Soviet Voter: Evidence from the Caucasus

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy – Political Science
Department of Political Science

John Tuman, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Co-Chair

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.
Graduate College Dean

Christian Jensen, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Co-Chair

David Damore, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Michele Kuenzi, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Mary Siegmaier, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Dmitri Shalin, Ph.D.
Graduate College Faculty Representative

Abstract

In western liberal democracies, voting behavior is often times characterized by sociological and psychological indicators. Party identification and issues such as the economy dominant the vote function of the electorate. In the post-Soviet space, party volatility and the competitive authoritarian nature of regimes may result in voters failing to act as agents of accountability. In this dissertation, I argue that the socio-psychological theory of voting behavior applies to post-Soviet electorate in the Caucasus. I demonstrate that Armenian and Georgian voters rely on partisanship as well as perceptions of the economy when casting electoral judgment on the incumbent party. This research furthers the applicability of the socio-psychological theory beyond countries with mature and durable party structures, and demonstrates that voters in competitive authoritarian regimes can act as agents of electoral accountability.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this work would not be possible without the members of my dissertation committee. Their mentorship capacity was central to framing, drafting, and completing this work. I would like to thank my co-chairs, Dr. Christian Jensen and Dr. John Tuman for their relentless effort towards my academic progress and their patience in guiding this research toward its completion. I would like to thank Dr. Dmitri Shalin for both his willingness to serve on my committee and for also introducing me to the challenges of post-Soviet societies in Fall 2006. I would also like to thank Dr. David Damore and Dr. Michele Kuenzi for not only serving on my committee but introducing me to the political behavior literature in Spring 2011. A special gratitude is owed to Dr. Mary Stegmaier who provided vital suggestions towards both the field research and the completion of my dissertation.

Beyond the committee, I would like to thank Dr. Rebecca Gill for expanding my scope of research methods, and for always offering suggestions toward improving my research design for this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Lewis-Beck for his dedication towards my progression as a young scholar and a student of economic voting. A central theme in this dissertation, the *patronal* nature of post-Soviet systems, would not be possible without the work of Dr. Henry Hale. I would like to thank Dr. Hale for his feedback on political behavior in the post-Soviet space, particularly the construction of the Armenian Election Study and the conceptualization of patronal voting.

Finally, a special gratitude is bestowed upon the faculty and staff of the political science department at UNLV and the American University of Armenia.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In spring of 2018, the Armenian people took to the streets to demand the resignation of their patron-in-chief, Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan. The newly appointed premier, whose reign over the landlocked republic spanned a decade, had made a costly miscalculation. In 2014, while advocating for a constitutional referendum to transition Armenia's governing structure from a semi-presidential republic to a parliamentary system, President Sargsyan had promised Armenian citizens that he would not seek the role of prime minister if the referendums were approved. However, following the 2017 parliamentary elections Sargsyan reverted and accepted the position of prime minister. Despite the change of course, Sargsyan's new title was short-lived. On the sixth day of his premiership, amidst widespread protests and disobedience campaigns, Sargsyan resigned triggering a 'domino effect' that concluded with the December 2018 parliamentary elections and the political demise of Armenia's *party of power*[1], the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA).

Armenia's successful *velvet revolution*[2] was not the only shift in the region. On November 28th, 2018 Georgian voters elected Salome Zurabishvili, the country's first female president. The Georgian electorate, who had witnessed a similar *rose revolution*[3] in 2003, participated in the country's last direct presidential election. In 2017, the Georgian parliament

[1] A party of power is a governing party (a) that is affiliated with the executive (patron-in-chief); (b) whose members maintain plurality or majority seats in the legislature; (b) that establishes a hierarchical structure of power diffusion from within the party elite and (c) maintains a well-organized network of support coalitions (or selectorates). The durability of parties of power differs across the post-Soviet region. Party of power translates to *партия власти* in Russian.

[2] The spring 2018 mass uprisings in Yerevan and throughout the country became dubbed as Armenia's *velvet revolution* by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Pashinyan, then a member of parliament and the opposition, led a non-violent demonstration against the prime ministership of Sargsyan. Pashinyan's categorization of *velvet revolution* was in reference to the Czechoslovakian non-violence movement in 1989.

[3] The *rose revolution* was led by Mikheil Saakashvili in the aftermath of the 2003 Georgian parliamentary elections. The mass uprising was dubbed the rose revolution because Saakashvili and his supporters protested with roses as a sign of peace.

adopted constitutional amendments that ultimately transitioned Georgia into a parliamentary system. The willingness of both regimes to favor a parliamentary republic stemmed from a push to rein in the powers of the unitary executive while expanding the scope of each country's party of power. In Georgia, Georgian Dream, the country's party of power, actively pressed for the adoption of a parliamentary system (RFERL 2017). Following a successful constitutional amendment campaign, Georgian Dream then extended its control over the presidency by supporting Zurabishvili's candidacy through quasi-legal tactics.[4] Interestingly, the manner in which Georgian Dream secured victory for its candidate, Zurabishvili, was internationally overshadowed by the fact that the country had elected its first female president.

The success of Georgian Dream, and its method of maintaining a support structure, parallels that of the RPA. Both governing parties created patronal networks[5], which then became the basis for voter mobilization. In fact, the political behavior of incumbent parties in Armenia and Georgia is a microcosm of parties of power throughout the post-Soviet space.[6] Theoretically, the ability of such parties to maintain a support structure is contrary to the notion of voters being agents of accountability. Instead of holding their officials accountable for government mismanagement, it may seem that voters in the post-Soviet republics are ignoring electoral

[4] Georgia's 2018 Presidential election was conducted under a two-round runoff system. In the first round, the opposition candidate, Grigol Vashadze, came within one-percentage point of Zurabishvili's vote share. The closeness of the initial round created a worrisome atmosphere within Georgian Dream, whose founder, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, disclosed an intention by his charitable organization to cover the personal debts of some 600,000 Georgians.

[5] A patronal network consists of patrons and clients who, as part of a network, compete for scarce state resources (Hale 2015). These networks are usually pyramid-structured and are held together mainly through personalized relationships. For more insight into the conceptualization of patronal networks and patronal systems in the post-Soviet space, see Hale (2015).

[6] In this dissertation, I use the terms post-Soviet space, post-Soviet regimes, and post-Soviet republics to mean the original twelve republics of the Soviet Union: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. These countries share several commonalities, including patronal structures (Hale 2015). The Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are not part of post-Soviet studies because their political system, democratic consolidation, and economic transition is more aligned with the European Union.

accountability and actively supporting the patronal structure of politics. Although post-Soviet voters may respond to patronal appeals[7], voter behavior in the region may also resemble the partisan-centric models that are abundant in western liberal democracies. Unfortunately, a comprehensive account of voter behavior in post-Soviet republics has yet to appear, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Consequently, the behavioral traits of the post-Soviet voter remain at odds with electoral accountability theorists.

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a theoretically-structured account of post-Soviet voting behavior. In particular, I challenge prior scholarship (e.g. Rose et al. 2001; White et al. 1997; Wyman 1996) that suggests that the underdevelopment of partisanship drives voting in post-Soviet republics, implying a disconnect between the traditional determinants of voting found in western liberal democracies and those of the post-Soviet regimes. Due to the prevalence of competitive authoritarian regimes in the region, studies of voting behavior are scarce. Although transitions towards a liberal polity began in the 1990s, democratic institutions, multipartyism, and elections remain underdeveloped. Despite the prospects for deepening democracy, the region has largely abandoned democratic norms, and instead embraced competitive or full authoritarianism.[8] However, by analyzing the behavioral traits of voters in Armenia and Georgia, I demonstrate that even within the confines of competitive authoritarianism, the voting determinants found in western liberal democracies may be similarly applied to post-Soviet republics in the Caucasus.

[7] Here, we can consider such members of the electorate to be *patronal voters*. A patronal voter is a member of the electorate who basis his or her vote function primarily on personal acquittances with agents of patronal network.
[8] As of 2019, Armenia remains the sole, post-Soviet country that has prospects for a successful democratic breakthrough. Although it is too soon to rule out the velvet revolution as a success in ushering in liberal democratic values, the country does seem to be moving in that direction.

My research objective is to analyze the electoral behavior of the post-Soviet voter. The phrase 'post-Soviet voter' assumes a standard behavioral trait that can be exemplified throughout the post-Soviet region, some twelve independent states. Although critics may contend that the post-Soviet space is comprised of heterogenous electorates, I argue that voters in the region are more similar than they are dissimilar. The concept of the post-Soviet voter stems from several assumptions. First, inhabitants have a history of social uniformity. For almost eighty years, the region was a political experiment for the creation of *homo Sovieticus*. According to Yemelianova (2014), the prototype Soviet man was one that combined a secular Soviet identity with a subordinate ethno-national trait. The region's history of achieving a new type of *homo politicus* paves the way for the attempt to study the post-Soviet voter. Second, the post-Soviet voter resides in a relatively similar political environment. All twelve Soviet republics are authoritarian regimes.[9] Moreover, the organization of political, economic, and social life continues to be dominated by informal political maneuvering, such as patronal networks[10], *telefonnoye parvo*[11], and *blat*.[12] Finally, for many post-Soviet citizens living in rural regions, economic life in the last thirty years largely remained unchanged. Based on the tenants of modernization theory, the stagnation of economic life throughout the rural region creates similar socio-political conditions. In short, the region now comprises of a new political actor: *The homo post-Sovieticus.*

[9] Using Levitsky and Way's (2010) regime categorization, we can consider Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine as competitive authoritarian regimes. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan can be categorized as full authoritarian regimes.
[10] See Hale (2015)
[11] *Telefonnoye parvo* translates to telephone justice. While the root concept was coined during the Soviet period (e.g. Vaksberg 1986), its meaning translates to "the practice of making an informal command, request, or signal in order to influence formal procedures or decision-making" (Ledeneva 2008: 326).
[12] *Blat*, or "the use of personal networks in order to circumvent formal procedures" (Ledeneva 1998: 4) is a common phrase used throughout post-Soviet societies to describe the pathway for political, economic, and social mobility. A more specific definition is "the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and find a way around formal procedures" (Ledeneva 1998: 1)

The motivation for this dissertation stems from three observations. First, for students of authoritarian regimes, the Caucasus is one of the most dynamic regions of the former Soviet Union. Since the collapse of the USSR, four former Soviet republics have experienced "colored" revolutions, two of which have occurred in the Caucasus. Until Armenia's velvet revolution, the region contained three countries with three subtypes of authoritarian regimes. Armenia was classified as a stable competitive authoritarian regime because of the incumbent's ability to maintain coercive structure and organizational strength (Levitsky and Way 2010: 208). By contrast, Georgia is considered an unstable competitive authoritarian regime because of the incumbent's weak organizational strength and coercive structure, which in the past led to several government overthrows (Levitsky and Way 2010: 221). Finally, Azerbaijan is categorized as a full authoritarian regime due to Aliyev's complete control of political power. Thus, the region exhibits variations in subtypes of authoritarian regimes.

Second, despite the variation in autocracy within the Caucasus, the region remains understudied in comparative politics. The lack of scholarly insight of the voters in the region may be due to the priority that analysts assign to 'high politics'. After all, the Caucasus contains three separate frozen conflicts that have received much of scholarly interest from international relations scholar. Another motivating factor is the fact that most voter behavior literature in the region tends to assume a Slavo-centric context. An examination of the post-Soviet voter beyond Russia and Ukraine can expand the breadth of voting behavior scholarship in the region.

A motivating factor for this study is my assumption that voters have universal demands and interests, regardless of the type of regime. The Caucasus voter[13], just like his or her

[13] In this dissertation, the term Caucasian is used to denote its original meaning: people of the Caucasus. In western societies today, the word Caucasian is used as a racial category and is entirely disengaged from the word, Caucasus. This is due to the impact of Johann Blumenbach's (1865) disputed research on racial classifications.

American counterpart, may base her or his vote on partisan orientation, an increase in economic wellbeing, or the adoption of favorable policies.[14] In this dissertation, I will seek to demonstrate that the application of western voter behavior models indicates that both Armenians and Georgians are partisan, economic, and issue-oriented voters.

The Social Psychology of Voter Behavior

The behavior of the electorate is a core pillar of political participation. In western liberal democracies, where political participation is largely unconstrained, studies of voting behavior are central to understanding the success of governments.[15] In patronal polities, where the political participation is heavily regulated and skewed toward securing the success of incumbent governments, analysts assume that voter behavior is of less importance, and thus much less ink has been spilled explaining the behavioral patterns of the electorate. One reason for this academic neglect is due to how elections are perceived by the masses and administered by the elite.

In patronal polities, elections are a mechanism by which the incumbent government maintains its grip on power. Externally, patronal politicians employ elections to legitimize their regime within the international community. Internally, governments use elections as a means to create the illusion of electoral competition, to coopt the opposition, restructure patronal

[14] A recent field experiment by Fumagalli and Turmanidze (2017) in Yerevan and Tbilisi demonstrates that voters maintain party preferences that are partially based on policy and, to some extent, political considerations.
[15] Western societies do not have flawless participation rules. For example, America's voter ID laws can be considered impeding on political participation.

networks, and increase the distribution of patronage.[16] In other words, elections in patronal societies are anything but an accountability mechanism of government performance. As a result, the vote function of the electorate is of lesser importance because voters cast decisions in occasionally free but constantly unfair electoral arenas.[17]

In western liberal democracies, by contrast, elections provide a periodic check of government performance. During an electoral season, the incumbent party seeks to convince voters that its political stewardship is worthy of an extension. If voters are satisfied with their government, they *reward* the incumbent party by casting a favorable vote; if they are dissatisfied with their government, they *punish* the government by casting a vote for the opposition. The behavioral aspect of voter satisfaction and dissatisfaction is what concerns many voting behavior scholars.

Among the theoretical perspectives, the socio-psychological model (SPM) has received a disproportionate amount of attention.[18] This approach posits voting as a convergence between sociological and psychological influences. The former emphasizes social cleavages as main predictors of one's vote function. That is, the social group (e.g. race, religion, or class) to which one belongs to directly determine her or his vote preferences. The latter factor emphasizes

[16] This patronage can be individual-based, or when a voter is offered goods and services in exchange for their vote. For example, during the 1998 Armenian presidential elections the headquarters of the incumbent's campaign office distributed kerosene to Armenian voters in exchange for supporting the candidate (OSCE, 2003). The patronage can also be communal-based. For example, during the 2013 Armenian presidential elections the incumbent Republican Party of Armenia constructed (and revitalized) several community parks and recreation facilities throughout the Yerevan.

[17] Except for Central Asian Republics, the remaining post-Soviet patronal polities are considered some form of competitive authoritarian regimes. According to Levitsky and Way (2010), elections in such regimes are conducted in a free but not necessarily fair setting.

[18] Prior to SPM, voting behavior scholarship was largely comprised of sociological, psychological, and rational (choice) perspectives. Each theory emphasized as specific behavioral aspect of the vote function. While each provided a sound account of voting behavior, the analyses were incomplete. The sociological school neglected psychological impacts on individual vote choice, while the psychological school neglected group-centric influences. The prevalence of SPM is in its ability to account for (and include) competing theories of voting behavior, including sociological, psychological, rational choice, and historical institutional (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008).

psychological attachments as the main predictor of one's vote function. One such psychological attachment is party identification. According to the SPM, partisanship acts as the main predictor of voting behavior. In other words, having a psychological attachment to a specific political group leads one to eventually cast a vote for their preferred party. Proponents of SPM argue that exogenous, sociodemographic variables, such as age and gender, are 'funneled' through party identification, creating a funnel-of-causality process and demonstrating that the vote choice is largely a function of partisanship.

The salience of SPM is its applicability in voluminous case studies.[19] Despite this, its application is largely limited to western liberal democracies. This is primarily due to two reasons. First, western liberal democracies are ideal laboratories for election studies. Many liberal democracies have had reoccurring elections without much political disruption. As a result, there is longer time horizon under which voting behavior is observed. Second, western liberal democracies are generally stable, which not only allows political parties to flourish and mature, but also fosters the ever presence of partisanship. Because partisanship is a central component of SPM, a stable partisan public results in SPM being largely applied to western polities. Thus, the application of SPM in western liberal democracies is as unsurprising as it is intellectually unstimulating.

For scholars to truly challenge the tenants of SPM and demonstrate its external validity, the context for empirical research needs to move beyond western liberal democracies. The

[19] For single country analyses, see: Aitkin (1977) regarding the Australian electorate; Campbell et al. (1960) regarding the American electorate; Butler and Stokes (1969) regarding the British electorate; Converse and Pierce (1986) regarding the French electorate. For cross-national works, see: Bengtsson et al. (2014) regarding the Nordic electorate; Carlin et al. (2015) and Nadeau et al. (2017) regarding the Latin American electorate.

application of SPM in developing countries[20] offers the best solution. However, developing countries present some challenges to SPM. First, such countries lack a mature party landscape. Although political parties in western liberal democracies are strong and durable, developing areas are often characterized by party and electoral volatility (Powell and Tucker 2014; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Kuenzi et al. 2017). In developing countries, the emergence of new political parties prior to an election is a common occurrence. In western liberal democracies, the emergence of new parties prior to an election is quite uncommon and tends to occur in waves.[21]

Second, many voters in developing countries tend to lack strong partisan ties beyond the incumbent party. This is because opposition parties rarely survive for more than a few election cycles. Just as voters are beginning to display partisan attachments, their party ceases to exist. Finally, the lack of durable opposition parties does not automatically result in a complete non-partisan atmosphere, for developing countries are abundant in parties of power. These party hegemons tend to dominate the political landscape for multiple election cycles. Furthermore, through patron-client relationships their political outreach extends into social and economic spheres. Contrary to western liberal democracies, the economic mobility of the citizenry is largely tied to the relationship with the *parties of power*. Thus, partisan attachments in the developing world are not based on voter-party issue alignment, but on patronage (Kuenzi et al. 2017; Remmer 2007). The electoral atmosphere in developing countries offers the most

[20] We can qualify post-Soviet republics as developing countries because their economic transitions and political liberalization is still 'developing'. Despite their upward trajectory during periods of Soviet development, their stagnant path towards political liberalization and orientation to competitive authoritarianism is comparable with countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

[21] For example, the emergence of Green Parties in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently the emergence of populist parties.

challenging test for the universality of SPM. Western-oriented analyses, while ideal for SPM, severely limits that falsification of the theory.

The Post-Soviet Polity

In 1991, Armenia and Georgia emerged from seventy years of Soviet authoritarian rule. During this period, the communist regime managed to alter perceptions of pre-Soviet realities.[22] Socially, forms of ethno-national history were severally limited, if not outright banned. Instead, *homo-Sovieticus* was the social fabric of Armenians and Georgians. Economically, free enterprise and business-seeking behavior was forbidden, leading to the rise of the black market and informal entrepreneurship. The central-planned economy that dished out limitations on goods and services naturally created shortages, and black markets that attempted to capitalize on scarcity. Politically, the Soviet state limited forms of political participation. Membership in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), intolerance for political dissidents, and the electoral hegemony of CPSU created omnipotent barriers of political activity on the part of the Soviet citizen. When the Soviet regime collapsed, jubilant western scholars became victims of their own imagination and predicted the spread of democratization across the entire region. The transition to post-Soviet society demonstrated the profound impact that competitive authoritarian regimes have on institutions and society (see, for example, Casper 1995). The inability to foster

[22] Initially, pre-Soviet history and legacy was neglected. Over time, the Soviet system liberalized the practice of ethno-national history so long that it complemented Soviet history. Although the Soviet Union suppressed forms of national identity and other social considerations, the communist regime did provide an unprecedented amount of economic development and progressive socioeconomic policies. For instance, the Soviet system created a model affirmative action program that sought to empower many disadvantaged ethnic groups. The Soviet system also increased female labor participation rates, provided near universal education for its population, and transitioned many feudal economies and communities toward vibrating manufacturing hubs. One such case was Soviet Armenia, which was said to maintain the largest concentration of manufacturing plants per capita throughout the USSR.

an open marketplace of ideas limited the development and growth of social justice, market-oriented capitalism, and partisan identity.

Unlike in western liberal democracies, partisan interactions in the post-Soviet space are not defined along ideological lines. Rather, they focus on connections to the party of power or the patron-in-chief. For example, the 1992 parliamentary election in Georgia included the participation of multiple political parties. Despite this, voters identified most parties not by their electoral platforms and their ideological orientations, but by their favorability (or unfavourability) to President Eduard Shevardnadze. The 1999 Armenian parliamentary election was conducted "…mainly among personalities rather than political platforms" (OSCE 1999: 2). Since independence, the personalized nature of electoral campaigns has been the norm in the Caucasus. Campaigns in the region are largely focused on the personality of the party leader, rather than issue differentiation. This may impede the ability of the post-Soviet voter to engage in issue-based voting.

Post-Soviet regimes have featured an abundance of new, short-lived parties. The parties of power notwithstanding, most parties and blocs rarely survive beyond one election cycle. For example, the 2017 Armenian Parliamentary elections consisted of five newly formed political parties and two newly formed pre-electoral coalitions. This high turnover rate is due to the personalization of political parties. As political personalities gain national recognition, they immediately form parties and contest elections. However, after the party does not meet an electoral threshold the personality may either rebrand their message under a new political banner or completely wither away from the political scene. The presence of short-lived parties combined with the comparative authoritarian nature of the political system creates unfavorable conditions

for the success of SPM, a model which ultimately relies on political stability and partisan maturity.

The Post-Soviet Voter

The characteristics of the post-Soviet voter presents further challenges to the generalizability of SPM. Western liberal democracies facilitate an open marketplace of ideas which translate to voters not only being conscious of their political preferences, but also acting on them. Due to the Soviet legacy, the post-Soviet voter in the Caucasus inherits a regulated marketplace of ideas, which then impacts ballot behavior. For instance, voter behavior in the Caucasus is often void of candidate or party platform analysis. Instead, behavior is influenced by wealthy individuals within the community, who act as power brokers and patrons of economic mobility (Sahakyan and Atanesyan 2006). Election results in western democracies are uncertain, despite an incumbency advantage. Voters cast ballots with the understanding that the results are not predetermined. In the post-Soviet space, elections are a mechanism by which the party of power justifies and extends its rule; their results are largely predetermined. The success of the incumbent is based on its ability to sustain and expand its patronal network. Instead of the incumbency advantage, the party of power is characterized by *incumbency clientage*.[23]

Incumbency clientage is the ability of parties of power to extend their rule by either sustaining or expanding their patronal network prior to an electoral season. We can think of incumbency clientage as a form of incumbency advantage that is prevalent in the post-Soviet space. Parties of power are constantly seeking new clients, to successfully preempt the

[23] Incumbency clientage parallels the notion of incumbency advantage in western liberal democracies. However, whereas incumbency advantage relies on formal agents (e.g. media, campaign contributions, etc.) to ensure the sustainability of power incumbency clientage relies on informal methods (e.g. patronal networks, expansion of clients, etc.) to ensure electoral success.

emergence of rival parties and their patronal networks. This process of clientele accumulation is furthered prior to an electoral season. Despite the presence of electoral manipulation, elections in post-Soviet republics provide a heuristic for the level of support each patronal network maintains. Thus, parties of power rely on incumbency clientage to maintain political supremacy.

In western liberal democracies voters cast ballots under a free and fair electoral process. Voter fraud is extremely minimal, voter intimidation inside polling stations is non-existent, and parties largely compete on an equal footing. In the post-Soviet space, elections are "often unfree and almost always unfair" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 8). At the elite level, agents of the parties of power use their status within their patronal network to influence the masses. As an election season nears, it is quite common to observe government initiating infrastructural investment in communities. For example, in the *Kanaker-Zeytun* district of Yerevan the incumbent government regularly revitalizes parks and refreshes the asphalt roads prior to an election. Besides communal reinvestment, the parties of power may canvas communities offering monetary support in exchange for votes. The guarantee of such support is perfected through *carousel* voting and other practices.[24] The use of monetary instruments to 'purchase' electoral support is quite common in the Caucasus. In the 2018 Georgian Presidential elections, the founder of the Georgian Dream party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, announced that his charitable organization would pay the personal debts of some 600,000 Georgian residents.[25] This announcement occurred one week prior to the runoff between Georgian Dream and the United National Movement, Georgia's main opposition.

[24] Carousel voting occurs when the de facto party of power representative enter the voting booth, marks the ballot, but does not cast it. Instead, the ballot is passed down to the next voter, who with their blank ballot and the pre-marked ballot enters the voting booth and casts the latter. The voter then gives the blank ballot to the party representative who then marks the ballot and gives it to the next voter (Sahakyan and Atanesyan 2006). This process ensures that voters are not casting ballots that are against the party of power.

[25] This was not the first time that Ivanishvili used his assets to influence a political outcome. In September 2013 during Georgia's presidential election, then-Prime Minister Ivanishvili pledged $1 billion of his personal wealth towards a fund that would invest in Georgia's economy (NDI 2014).

Overall, the electoral climate in the post-Soviet space is heavily influenced and skewed towards the parties of power.

In western liberal democracies, research suggests that voters are oriented toward political parties whose platforms are closely aligned with their political preferences. In the post-Soviet space, voters lack issue-based political orientation since parties lack positional political platforms.[26] Instead, voters form political preferences through other, more egotropic means. In other words, voters respond to patronal cues based on egotropic political preferences. Contrary to the sociotropic logic of the western voter, which asks '*What has the party done for the country?',* the post-Soviet voter asks, '*What has the party's network done for me?'* This egotropic thought process is based on the notion that the relationship between voter and party is centered around patronage. When entering the voting booth, post-Soviet voters will analyze political parties, based on the type of patronal network they belong to. If their party is unable to provide pocketbook improvements, they may defect. If their party can provide pocketbook improvements, they may commit. Thus, partisan identification does not occur based on issue convergence but on personalistic or egotropic ties to a party and its network. In all, the behavior type of the post-Soviet voter differs from the sociotropic type we witness in western liberal democracies.

Empirical Limitations

Prior to providing a brief synopsis of each chapter, I want to discuss the limitations of the research. First, post-Soviet voter behavior is generalized from a study of two countries in the Caucasus: Armenia and Georgia. Although the ability to generalize results from the Caucasus to

[26] Political platforms in the post-Soviet space tend to be centered on valence issues. The economy, crime, and corruption are examples.

the rest of the post-Soviet region is a formidable challenge, the two cases under consideration do exhibit the potential to produce generalizable findings. The post-Soviet space consists of full authoritarian and competitive authoritarian regimes.[27] According to Levitsky and Way (2010), competitive authoritarian regimes are divided between unstable and stable types. Levitsky and Way categorize Armenia as a stable competitive authoritarian regime and Georgia as an unstable competitive authoritarian regime. Thus, observing voting behavior in the two sub-groups of competitive authoritarian regimes helps the prospect of generalizing vote patterns in Armenia and Georgia to the rest of the post-Soviet space.[28]

Another limitation to the current study is the different methodological design of each survey. The Armenian case study consists of a pre-electoral voter behavior analysis implemented via telephone survey. The Georgian case study consists of a pre-electoral public attitudes survey implemented via face-to-face interviews. As shall be discussed in Chapter 3, the two survey modes are considerably different and may be prone to skewed responses. Aside from the varying survey types, the two samples also differ in size. The Georgian sample size is extensively larger than the Armenian sample size. The different methodological component of each survey prevents the convergence of both samples into a truly cross-national sample. The inability to combine both samples into a single multivariate model forces the presentation of descriptive and inferential results in a separate manner.

[27] While classification of a certain type or sub-type of regime is not a static process and post-Soviet countries have evolved between various authoritarian typologies, we can consider the twelve original Soviet republics into one of three regime types: full authoritarian, stable competitive authoritarian, and unstable competitive authoritarian. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are categorized as fully authoritarian regimes. Armenia, Belarus, and Russia are categorized as stable competitive authoritarian regimes. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine can be considered as unstable competitive authoritarian regimes.

[28] The Caucasus is an ideal setting for testing the post-Soviet voter since each of the three countries that make up the region have a distinct regime type. Ideally, this project would include voting behavior analyses from Azerbaijan as a proxy for a full authoritarian regime type. Unfortunately, I was not able to conduct field research in Azerbaijan due to the ongoing issues with western organizations and researchers.

Third, since the research design relies on survey items, the methodology may contain random measurement error. Consequently, its presence can adversely impact coefficient estimates towards null findings (Angrist and Pischke 2009; Healy and Lenz, 2017). This "iron law of econometrics" which causes suppression of coefficient estimates to zero, cannot be avoided in sample surveys (Hausman 2001). Ideally, one way to reduce such error is to rely on voter registry data and compare the information with the survey results. Unfortunately, both governments were unwilling to provide such data for comparison.

A fourth methodological limitation is the cross-sectional nature of each data set. The Armenian sample relies on a survey administered in March 2017, and the Georgian sample relies on a survey administered in June 2016. Both surveys were conducted within six months of each country's legislative elections. Thus, each survey measured political opinions at a specific point in time. Therefore, the cross-sectional nature of the data severely limits the ability to demonstrate causality. In addition, a single snapshot of electoral behavior limits the ability to generalize voting behavior traits beyond a specific time period.

Finally, this study focuses on Armenia prior to 2018. The 2017 parliamentary election was conducted under a partially free but unfair electoral setting. In many ways the outcome of the 2017 election was the first step towards the 2018 velvet revolution, which ultimately ended Sargsyan's political career and RPA's control over the country.[29] That said, the current analysis does not consider the political shift that occurred following the resignation of the Sargsyan administration and my survey analysis of the Armenian voter is limited prior the 2018 events.

Manuscript Path

[29] The victory of RPA created a domino effect, which ultimately resulted in the political exodus of the party. In 2017, RPA's victory led to the party's ability to nominate Serzh Sargsyan as the country's prime minister.

Prior to addressing the contents of each chapter, I want to briefly discuss the composition of voting behavior works. Conventionally, the content is presented in a *block* manner, where each chapter analyzes specific sets of behavioral determinants (e.g. sociodemographic, socioeconomic, partisan, etc.), and the previous indicators are included in the subsequent chapter. The empirical chapters of this manuscript follow a similar order, beginning with sociodemographic vote determinants and concluding with the impact of economic and non-economic issues. Where this manuscript differs is in the presentation of the preceding material. Instead of combining each theoretical and methodological design of an indicator into the empirical chapter, I present standalone theoretical and methodological chapters, prior to introducing the empirical chapters. Standalone theory and research design chapters provide a better flow of the manuscript and a parsimonious understanding of the material. The rest of the dissertation is divided into seven chapters:

The second chapter introduces the theoretical foundations of the study. First, I discuss the three classic voting behavior perspectives, beginning with the sociological, rational, and the socio-psychological models. Each *school* presented a distinct understanding of what factors influenced the vote choice. The earliest *school* posited a sociological understanding of the vote. That is, individuals were influenced by group-oriented indicators. This notion was challenged by the second *school*, who assumed the act of voting as a utility-maximizing calculation that is mainly concerned with self-interest. Finally, the third *school* synthesized both group-level and individual-level indicators, ultimately positing partisanship as the leading predictor of the vote. After discussing the historical perspectives, the second part of the chapter constructs the post-Soviet vote function. Paralleling the funnel of causality thesis, I divide the vote determinants into the following groups: sociodemographics, socioeconomics, partisanship, and the economy. In

modeling the post-Soviet voter, I combine works in each of the groups and then proceed with hypotheses formation.

In the third chapter, I discuss the research design of the study. I rely on a block recursive technique to predict the incumbent vote intention of the Armenian and Georgian electorate. A block recursive approach best fits voting behavior analysis since its emphasis on regression *blocks* parallels the funnel of causality approach outlined in the previous chapter. Next, I outline how previous post-Soviet surveys have operationalized political behavior and the limitations such surveys presented. This discussion then leads to the research design of the post-Soviet voter. I rely on two surveys, the Armenian Election Study (ArmES) and the Georgian Public Attitudes Survey (GPAS), to gather voter behavior data and operationalize incumbent support and its predictors. The former is an original field research conducted by the author prior to the 2017 Armenian parliamentary elections. It is the first election study of its kind in the Republic of Armenia.

Chapter four through seven are the four empirical sections of the dissertation and each addresses a specific set of determinants of the vote function. The fourth chapter applies three sociodemographic determinants to the vote function: sex, age, and geographical settlement. I test three assumptions: younger voters in Armenia and Georgia are less likely to vote for the incumbent party; female voters in Armenia and Georgia are less likely to vote for the incumbent party; and rural voters in Armenia and Georgia are more likely to vote for the incumbent party. The sociodemographic results are mixed. Age is the only variable that is statically significant across both electorates ($\rho \leq .01$). In Armenia, neither sex nor geographical settlement is predictive of incumbent vote intention. However, rural Georgian voters tend to be more likely to vote for the incumbent.

Socioeconomic vote determinants are the theme of the fifth chapter. The socioeconomic indicators consist of three variables: educational attainment, employment status, and household income. I propose that higher educational attainment is inversely related to an incumbent vote intention; that employed respondents will be more likely to vote for the incumbent; and that households with income in the upper quartile are more (or less) likely to vote for the incumbent. The results for the Armenian sample suggest that only employment status is statistically significant ($\rho \leq .05$) with incumbent vote intention. For the Georgian sample, the socioeconomic determinants provide better predictability with all three covariates statistically significant ($\rho \leq .05$).

In chapter six, I include the omnipotent partisan variable into the vote function. Despite the infancy of partisan identity in the region, I expect incumbent partisanship to be a leading predictor of the vote due to the fact that incumbent parties tend to be more durable than opposition groups. In both samples, I find that the impact of partisanship is not only statistically significant ($\rho \leq .01$) but also substantively significant. The results for both the Armenian and Georgian electorate suggest that incumbent partisan attachment is by far the leading vote predictor in the Caucasus.

The last empirical chapter considers a central issue for Armenian and Georgian voters: the economy. I test the impact of prospective-egotropic economic perceptions on the incumbent vote function and find that positive economic wellbeing is associated with higher probability of an RPA and Georgian Dream vote. The impact of economic attitudes appears to be identical for both groups of voters. Both Armenian and Georgian voters relate their positive egotropic-prospective perceptions with a vote for the incumbent.

In chapter eight, I provide a comparative analysis between the two electorates, to what extent we can draw on generalizations of the post-Soviet voter based on the findings in the Caucasus and consider future research avenues. Above all, Armenian and Georgian voters rely on their party identification when casting an electoral judgement towards the incumbent. This is followed by prospective perceptions of their pocketbook as well as socioeconomic variables such as employment status and household income. In short, the electorate in the Caucasus is both a partisan and an economic voter. Beyond measures of the economy, I find that youthfulness impacts the vote function of both groups. Essentially, both Armenians and Georgians are quite similar in their vote patterns.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE POST-SOVIET VOTER

The dominant theories of voting behavior have largely been driven by scholarship on western democracies. The introduction of the sociological voter, the rational voter, and the socio-psychological voter (see: Campbell et al. 1960; Downs 1957; Lazarsfeld et al. 1948) have all occurred through analysis of elections in western societies. Despite this, many recent works have successful applied these three theoretical perspectives to non-western countries and regions (Bratton et al. 2012; Carlin et al. 2015; Nadeau et al. 2017). Unfortunately, scholarship has yet to thoroughly analyze the socio-psychological determinants of the vote beyond Russia in the post-Soviet region.[30] That is not to say that a poverty of political behavior scholarship exists. Hale's (2015) conceptualization of *patronal politics* sums up political behavior among elites (Also see: Baturo and Elkink 2015). According to Hale, elite-based political behavior is not oriented around "abstract" concepts such as ideology. Rather, it is tied to interpersonal networks (Hale refers to them as patronal networks) and the pursuit of material gains. Although Hale accurately describes the state of politics in the region, his discussion of patronalism is limited to behavior of the political and business elite.

Since the introduction of elections in post-Soviet polities, scholars have observed specific contents of the sociological and socio-psychological voting model. For example, the first batch of works traced the impact of sociodemographic characteristics, particularly region, on the vote choice in Russia and Ukraine (Birch 1995; Clem and Craumer 1996; 2000; Kubicek 2000). Another batch of works addressed the impact of economic reforms on the vote choice (Muyagkov and Ordeshook 2005; Wade et al. 1993; Duch 1995; Warner 2001). A final batch of

[30] Recent works tracing voting behavior in the Caucasus lack the theoretical pillars of SPM. For example, Babunashvili's (2017) analysis of retrospective voting in Georgia omits party identification from its list of covariates. In an analysis of the 2010 Kyrgyz election, Huskey and Hill (2013) model sociological factors on vote choice but fail to include the impact of party identification.

scholarship analyzed the development of partisanship in the region (Brader and Tucker 2001; Colton 2000; Miller et al. 2000; Miller and Klobucar 1999; Rose et al. 2001; White et al. 1997; Wyman et al. 1995; Wyman 1996). Many of these studies lacked the methodological foundation of SPM and, in many cases, ignored the central vote determining factor: party identification (But see: Colton 2000). More importantly, these batch of works interpreted the post-Soviet voter through a Slavo-centric analysis: case studies in Russia and Ukraine. Consequently, much of what we know about the post-Soviet voter stems from the Russian and Ukrainian voter. This critique is not meant to undercut the intellectual weight of such works, for they provide the necessary theoretical backdrop under which we can construct traits of the post-Soviet voter. However, to fully grasp a common vote function among the region's electorate, we must observe voting behavior beyond the Russian and Ukrainian electorate.

In this chapter, I lay out the theoretical backdrop to study the post-Soviet voter in the Caucasus. The chapter is divided into two sections. I begin by tracing the evolution of voting behavior perspectives. The earliest propositions concentrated on sociological groups as core determinants of the vote choice and relied on the U.S. electoral setting. Advocates of the sociological school categorized the electorate into social groups (class, region, etc.) and concluded that political preferences of the electorate were driven by sociodemographic and socioeconomic group membership. Challenges to the sociological perspective came from the rational school and the socio-psychological school. The latter revised the sociological perspective and posited that sociological variables were exogeneous to the actual vote. Instead, social group memberships were central to the formation of partisan identity. Although subsequent theories challenged SPM, the salience of party identification has withstood many criticisms and today is considered the leading vote predictor across different countries.

The second section incorporates existing literature on post-Soviet voting behavior into each of SPM's blocs: sociodemographics, socioeconomics, partisanship and issues. As mentioned earlier, voting behavior works in the region predominately address the vote function within the Russian electorate. The evolution of political behavior and voting in Russia has, in many ways, mirrored other post-Soviet republics. In the region, we have witnessed the rise of parties of power, party volatility among opposition groups, the influence of patronalism, the presence of carousel voting and other types of voting irregularities, and the emergence of patronal voting. These similarities, and the scarcity of voting behavior works in the Caucasus, allows one to rely on the Russian polity as a backdrop for hypothesis building.

The comparability between voting behavior in Russia and the electorate in the Caucasus stems from common Soviet political history, which naturally produced a distaste and distrust of politics and political parties that continues to this day.[31] The common patronal environment that the region transitioned to, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, furthers the ability to draw comparisons between observed Russian voting behavior and the electorate in the Caucasus. Patronal politics, I argue, not only defines relationships among elites but also between elites and the voters. In constructing the theoretical pillars of the post-Soviet voter in the Caucasus, I contend that patronalism can help explain the SPM vote function.

Classic Voter Behavior Perspectives

Scientific inquiries tend to produce outcomes that are largely a byproduct of their time. That is, we can often relate the propositions behind many theories to the social climate under which they were proposed. This statement applies to the evolution of voting behavior theories.

[31] See Libaridian (1999) for an analysis on citizenry distrust of political parties in Armenia.

For example, the salience of the sociological model was mainly due to the political climate during which ballot behavior was observed. One of the first works demonstrating the presence of sociological predictors traced voting behavior during the US Presidential election in 1940 (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948). Then, the political climate was heavily influenced by the incumbency of Roosevelt, who was vying for a third term. Lazarsfeld et al.'s (1948) approach to evaluate the impact a campaign season had on voting preference produced counter results due to the fact that many voters had their minds made up prior to election season. This was because the unprecedented motive to seek a third term produced polarizing attitudes towards a Roosevelt presidency. Thus, the context of the election shaped the conclusions reached.

Sociological Theory

The earliest theoretical perspective that analyzed voting behavior posited vote choice as a function of sociological indicators. Commonly referred to as the Columbian school, the sociological perspective was advocated by Lazarsfeld and colleagues (1948; 1954) who were one of the first social scientists to rely on panel-structured studies of the electorate. In their first work, *The People's Choice* (1948), Lazarsfeld et al. set out to model vote intention in Erie County, Ohio during the 1940 U.S. Presidential election. The pioneering study found that (1) individual political preferences was largely influenced by the political homogeneity of the family; (2) most individuals had made up their vote intention months prior to the start of the campaign; (3) the media and campaign had minimal impact on vote intention and (4) most of the electorate voted in line with their social group. Specifically, the authors found that one's socioeconomic status, religion, and residence was a leading predictor of their vote. Based on a single-county study, the authors concluded that social characteristics determined voting preferences (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948: 27).

Subsequent analyses in *Voting* (Berelson et al. 1954) furthered their argument that voters are driven by sociological factors and are minimally influenced by the election season. Using data from residents of Elmira, New York, Lazarsfeld and colleagues expanded the sociological forces to include such factors as union membership. The twin studies presented a compelling account of voting behavior: that one's vote function was primarily driven by placement within a collective group. In addition to demonstrating the salience of sociological forces, advocates of the sociological model also discussed the role of partisanship in political behavior. However, the interaction between social characteristics, partisanship and vote choice was overlooked. The inability to distinctively conceptualize party identification and assign it a central role in the vote function would become a criticism lobbed by scholars from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Socio-Psychological Theory

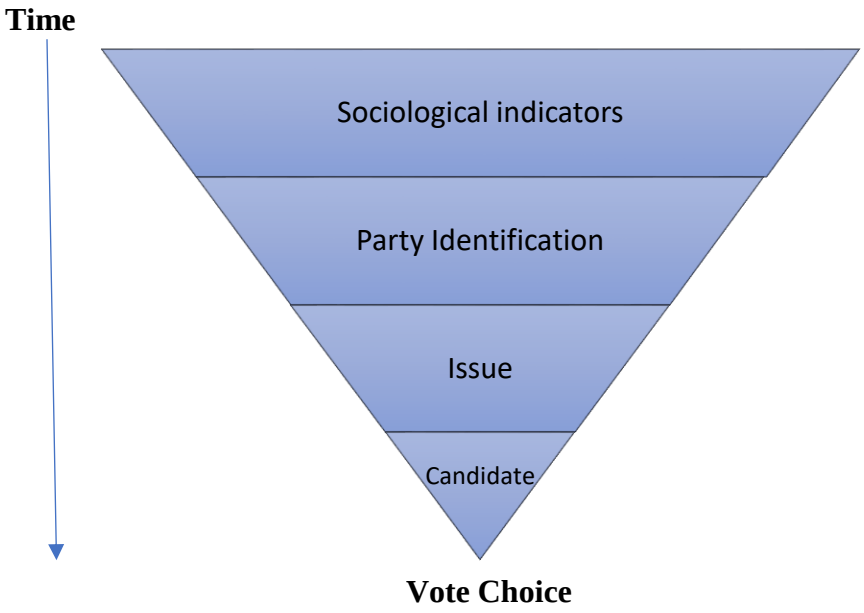
The Michigan school, led by Angus Campbell and colleagues, challenged the central assumption of the sociological model, that social groups are a direct predictor of voting behavior, and asserted that while sociological characteristics were central to political behavior they were not directly predictive of voting behavior. Instead, these factors were influential in predicting political socialization and the emergence of partisanship. One of the first works by the Michigan school was Campbell and Kahn's *The People Elect a President* (1952), where the authors demonstrated the instability of the sociological vote function. An analysis of the 1948 election, led Campbell and Kahn to conclude that sociological factors failed to predict voting behavior. In a follow-up work, Campbell and colleagues outlined a new theoretical perspective of voting behavior. In *The Voter Decides* (1956), the authors expanded their criticism of the sociological model and introduced the tenants of what became known as SPM.

The logic of SPM differed from the sociological model. First, this perspective accounted for non-sociological variables within the vote function, particularly attitudinal variables. These included partisanship, issues, and candidate evaluation. Campbell and colleagues conceptualized partisan identification as a psychological process of "affective orientation" (Campbell et al. 1960: 121). The authors posited party identification as the central predictor of the vote choice. According to Niemi and Weisberg (1993), this new approach introduced "political variables" into the vote function and provided a more dynamic interpretation of voting.

Second, SPM revised the arrow of causality between sociological forces and voting behavior. Instead of directly impacting the vote choice, Campbell and colleagues posited that sociological variables influenced the formation of party identification. In turn, party ID shaped perceptions of issues and candidate evaluation. This is referred to as partisan rationalization, whereby voters form positions on issues and candidates through a partisan lens.

Pioneers of the Michigan school expanded their theoretical approach in the *The American Voter* (1960) by illustrating the vote choice through a *funnel* of voting behavior. The funnel of causality is reproduced and illustrated in Figure 2.1. The funnel's outer tip consists of sociological forces. These include both sociodemographic (e.g. age, sex, residence) as well as socioeconomic (e.g. education, class, income) characteristics. Membership in these social groups over time influences that formation of the next block: party identification. The formation of party identification then impacts the narrow end of the funnel: issues and candidate evaluation. At the end of the funnel is the vote choice, which is directly and indirectly influenced by all the previous four blocks.

Figure 2.1: Funnel of Causality



Campbell and colleagues posited a chain reaction between the four blocks that, over time, produce the vote choice. Contemporarily, the funnel of causality is divided between long-term and short-term predictors (See: Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2016). The first two blocs, sociological factors and partisan identification, are considered long term because their influence rarely changes from election to election. For example, it is quite rare for American voters to change their partisan identification between election cycles. Sociological groups also tend to be constant between elections, although we may expect socioeconomic mobility to change over long periods of time. The next two blocs, issues and candidate evaluation, are considered short-term forces because issue perceptions change from one election to the next.[32] Indeed, it is rare that a single-issue item can dominate multiple consecutive election cycles. In all, the funnel of

[32] For example, America's involvement in Iraq was a central issue during the 2004 Presidential election. However, in 2008 the central issue during the Presidential election was the economy. Moreover, how voters perceive a specific issue may change from one election to the next. In 2004, voters had a generally positive perceptions of the general wellbeing of the economy. In 2008, however, the electorate was quite pessimistic about the overall state of the economy.

causality illustrates a synthesis between sociological and psychological forces in predicting the vote choice.

Rational Theory

The rational voter model owes its existence to the work of Anthony Downs. In *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), Downs set out to "rationalize" political behavior and demonstrate that the economics of voting was a central aspect in the decision-making calculus of the electorate. The rational argument contends that prior to entering a voting booth, individuals weigh the benefit of voting against its cost. According to Downs, for most of the electorate the cost of voting outweighs the benefit. This is primarily due to the high information barriers faced by the average voter. The cost-benefit function, however, differs for partisan voters, who naturally face a lower cost threshold. Thus, the economics of voting becomes more favorable to partisans than to non-partisans.

Morris Fiorina's (1981) analysis of retrospective traits in American elections expanded the scope of the rational school. In the period between Campbell et al.'s theoretical proposition and Fiorina's *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (1981), voting behavior scholars began to criticize the central pillar of SPM: the durability of party identification. Using election data in the 1960s, critics contended that a substantial number of voters switched their partisan loyalty between elections cycles (e.g. Dobson and Meeter 1974; Dobson and Angelo 1975; Meier 1975). Fiorina's work was a response to the pattern of studies suggesting the instability of partisanship. Fiorina took SPM's account of partisanship and revised the causal link. For Fiorina, party identification was as much of a byproduct of changes in the socio-political climate (e.g. issues, events, etc) as it was an input to such events. Fiorina conceptualized party identification in a rational manner, defining it as the difference between one's experiences

with political parties (Fiorina 1981; 1986). Fiorina's analysis of partisanship and voting behavior differed from Downs. The former based both concepts on retrospective considerations, while Downs professed a link between political behavior and prospective decision making.

Contemporary voting behavior works have relied on some variant of SPM to model the vote choice across different polities (Bratton et al. 2012; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Nadeau et al. 2017). The advantage of SPM is its central treatment of party identification, its synthesis of sociological and psychological factors, and the parsimony of the model, rooted in the funnel of causality (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In the section below, I first discuss existing voting behavior scholarship in post-Soviet republics. Relying on this literature and a descriptive analysis of voters in the Caucasus, I form eight hypotheses related to the sociodemographic, socioeconomic, partisan, and issue vote determinants.

Traits of the Post-Soviet Voter

To what extent does SPM predict the vote choice in the post-Soviet region? In this section, I highlight notable works that have analyzed the vote function in post-Soviet republics. Not surprisingly, the current crop of research is dominated by single-country studies.[33] In addition, an overwhelming majority of the works have observed voting patterns using the Russian electorate. Although a few studies incorporate SPM's funnel of causality approach (see: Colton 2000; Colton and Hale 2009), the rest omit various variables found in the "funnel", including partisanship (see: Rose et al. 2000; White et al. 2002).

Voting behavior analysis in the post-Soviet space has followed a similar path as scholarship in the West. Recall that early works suggested sociological factors impacting voting

[33] In voting behavior studies, specifically economic voting, there is an evolution of scholarships that begins with the dominance of single-country studies and, over time, expands to cross-national analyses.

behavior. In Russia, studies of ballot behavior in the initial post-Soviet elections concluded that voters were driven by sociological factors (e.g. Clem and Craumer 1996; White et al. 2002). However, analysis of more recent elections points toward the emergence of partisanship as a leading predictor of the vote choice (Miller and Klobucar 2000; Miller et al. 2000). Despite this similar path, one cannot ignore the different degrees of party emergence between the West and the post-Soviet region. For example, during the period of Lazarsfeld and colleagues case study, America's political system consisted of two mature and durable parties. In Russia and other post-Soviet republics, the emergence of political parties and party identification did not occur instantaneously and initially the region was abundant in party volatility (see: Chapter 6). Thus, the early salience of sociological factors in Russian voting behavior may be due to the infancy of the party politics.

Sociodemographics

In western liberal democracies, sociological indicators influence political participation, particularly voter turnout (see: Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). For example, U.S. turnout levels are higher for middle aged and older groups than for younger voters. In additional, educational attainment and higher income tends to be associated with higher turnout rates. How then do sociodemographic characteristics shape political behavior in the post-Soviet space? An early work by Wyman et al. (1995) provides a descriptive analysis of the Russian electorate during the 1993 Russian parliamentary elections, concluding that the relationship between age and political participation is similar to western democracies. Specifically, elder Russian voters were more likely to vote than younger Russian voters. When it came to voter residence, Wyman and colleagues found that rural residents tended to participate in larger percentages than urban voters.

Age

Beyond turnout rates, studies found young Russian voters favored market reform parties, while older voters preferred communist or socialist parties (Clem and Craumer 1996; Colton 2000; Colton and Hale 2009; Wyman et al. 1995; Wyman 1996). Since 1993, this has translated into young voters preferring the incumbent candidate, Yeltsin[34] and then Putin[35]. According to Wyman et al. (1995) the preference for parties of the old regime among older voters stems from the volatile economic swing experienced by the electorate following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many individuals not only lost their jobs, but also experienced a severe purchasing power devaluation of their pensions.

In the Caucasus, the preference of youth voters toward pro-market parties has been documented in the case of Georgia and the United National Movement (UNM) (Jones 2012). In fact, *Kmara*, a youth-led political activist group, was instrumental in fostering the change of power between Shevardnadze and Saakashvili during the 2003 rose revolution. Since the ascendance of Georgian Dream as the country's party of power, the youth vote has remained partially loyal to UNM. However, Babunashvili's (2017) inquiry into the incumbent vote function of the Georgian electorate was unable to find any statistical significance between age and vote for the incumbent in 2012 and 2015 election.

In Armenia, much less ink has been spilled on the relationship between age and political behavior. Despite a lack of scholarly insight, we can deduce the assumption of young voters disfavoring the RPA based on the events leading up to the velvet revolution. Since at least 2010, Armenia's youth has been the main organizer of anti-RPA protests. This includes the 2012

[34] Throughout the 1990s, President Yeltsin was the incumbent, and although he failed to establish a durable party of power during his tenure, his support coalition consisted of pro-market parties.
[35] Colton and Hale (2009) find an inverse relationship between age and a Yeltsin/Putin/Medvedev vote. That is, through 2008, older voters have been less likely to vote for all three past presidents.

ecological movement to save *Mashtots* Park, 2013 Yerevan bus fare protests and the 2015 electric Yerevan movement.[36] Beyond the three youth-led, counter incumbent protests, the participation of Armenia's youth in the 2018 velvet revolution was a central factor in Sargsyan's abrupt resignation.

Based on the collection of works analyzing the relationship between age and vote choice in the post-Soviet republics, I hypothesize that:

H_{1a}: Young Armenian voters are less likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{1b}: Young Georgian voters are less likely to vote for Georgian Dream.

The two hypotheses imply that both Armenian and Georgian youth voters are anti-incumbent voters and that both voter sub-groups behave in a similar manner. The fact that the youth are anti-incumbent decision-makers does not mean that their vote calculus is not incumbent-oriented. In fact, an anti-incumbent vote may still be considered an incumbent-oriented vote. That is, upon entering the voting booth youth voters in Armenia and Georgia isolate the incumbent from other parties and cast a negative electoral judgement. This phenomenon is relatable to negative voting (See: Kernell 1977; Fiorina and Shepsle 1989). In the case of Armenia and Georgia, the youth's opposition towards government may not necessarily be based on a set of policies. Instead, the origin of the displeasure may be found in the dissatisfaction with the patronal system of governance.

Sex

[36] The 2012 *Mashtots* park protests was aimed at preventing Armenia's government from reallocating park land to private construction firms. The 2013 bus fare protests were a reaction to an increase of public transportation fairs by fifty-percent. The youth organized a boycott of all public transportations by providing free rides to users of public transportation in their personal vehicles. The 2015 electric Yerevan protest was a reaction to an increase in electricity rates.

Scholarship analyzing the relationship between sex and vote choice is not as voluminous as other sociodemographic characteristics. Although early works provide conclusive findings vis-à-vis age, residence and vote choice, the impact of the voter's sex on her or his vote choice is mixed. During the Yeltsin era, a gender effect of the Yeltsin vote produced null results (Colton 2000). However, upon the ascendance of the Putin and Medvedev duo to the Russian presidency, Colton and Hale (2009) discover that female voters were more likely to favor Putin and Medvedev.

In the Caucasus, scholarly inquiry on the relationship between sex and vote choice has also received little attention. One of the few works that test this relationship is Babunashvili's (2017) analysis of the Georgian voter. Unfortunately, the author is unable to find a statistically significant relationship between sex and incumbent vote intention. That said, we can deduce a pair of hypotheses from the current political structure in Armenia and Georgia.

In both countries, the patronal systems and patron-client networks are patriarchal. In fact, through the conceptualization of a patronal structure as outlined by Hale (2015), the upper echelon of sub-patrons in both countries consist entirely of men. Despite pressure from the Council of Europe, which led to the introduction of gender quotas in Armenia's and Gerogia's national assembly, both systems maintain their patriarchal character. This is not to suggest that women are absent among political elites in Armenia and Georgia. However, the patronal structure of Armenia and Georgia, as suggested by Hale (2015), is completely dominated by

male patrons with female politicians taking on a technocratic role within each party of power.[37]

The descriptive narrative of political systems in the Caucasus suggests a male-dominant playing field that is not very inclusive to patronal roles for females. Based on this, the pair of hypotheses between sex and incumbent vote share state that:

H_{2a}: Armenian female voters are less likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{2b}: Georgian female voters are less likely to vote for Georgian Dream.

The presence of an anti-incumbent vote choice is also applicable to female voters. In both countries, the patriarchal system transcends the political sphere and is also present in business settings. The interconnectivity between the political and economic arena not only suppresses opportunities for women, it also may lead female voters to blame their lack of economic mobility on the current government. The 2017 ArmES provides a glimpse into the lack of upward mobility and perception of meritocracy among female voters. When asked whether respondents agreed that: *'in order to increase one's economic wellbeing, one must be a member or affiliated with the ruling party'* female voters agreed with this statement almost ten percentage points higher (44 percent) than male voters (36 percent).

Geography

In post-Soviet republics, the impact of geography on vote choice can be interpreted along two avenues. The first is a conventional understanding of geography that divides the electorate

[37] In Armenia, two female politicians can be considered in leadership positions. In the RPA, former minister of justice and vice president of the National Assembly, Arpine "Surb Arpi" Hovhannisyan, was a technocratic politician who became the "female" face of the party. Despite her political position, Hovhannisyan's role and power within the RPA does not fit the narrative of a patron or sub-patron. Another female politician whose party leadership does not translate into patron-status is Naira Zorabyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP). Despite being in PAP leadership, Zorabyan, too, is a technocratic politician that lacks any connection with patronal pyramids.

into settlement types: urban or rural. The second interpretation considers the specific region of the country where the voter resides. Both types have been found to influence the vote choice during the Yeltsin era. For example, the Yeltsin vote was strongest in larger Russian cities (Colton 2000; Kolossov et al. 2003) as well as in Northern Russia (Clem and Craumer 1996). Rural voters and voters residing in Southern Russia tended to be least likely to prefer a Yeltsin presidency (Wyman 1996). However, the statistically significant relationship between geography and incumbent vote choice has disappeared during Putin's tenure (Colton and Hale 2009; White and McAllister 2003).

The impact of regions on vote choice is most apparent in Ukraine (Hinich et al. 1999; Kubicek 2000). Political behavior in the European country is divided along ethnic, linguistic, and geographic lines. Eastern Ukraine tends to be more heterogeneous and includes a substantial ethnic Russian population, who speak Russian and have supported the Russian language as a *de jure* second official language of the country. Western Ukraine, on the other hand, is more ethnically homogeneous and consists almost entirely of ethnic Ukrainians. Voters in Western Ukraine are hostile towards policies of Russification. Ukraine's politicized geographic division dates back to Ukrainian independence and the presidency of Leonid Kravchuk. In fact, since Ukraine's independence, every Ukrainian election has been marked by politicized regional divisions (Bloom and Shulman 2011).[38]

The impact of geography on vote choice in the Caucasus is profound, particularly in rural regions. The dominance of sub-patrons in both polities has resulted in villages and small-sized

[38] Preliminary reports suggest that the 2019 Presidential election was the first national election to not include this dichotomous regional division. However, it is much too early to reach this empirical conclusion. Even if President-elect Zelensky was able to avoid the East-West vote choice discrepancy, this occurred primarily because of the unpopularity of another Poroshenko term.

cities coming under the political domain of both parties in power. During election seasons both the RPA and Georgian Dream over perform in rural villages, where politics is often structured around the local party boss (See: Chapter 4). The skewed level of support is because rural settlements lack the economic diversification present in the urban settings and thus are at the mercy of sub-patrons and their business conglomerates. This makes rural residents more tolerable and trusting of the government, than individuals residing in urban areas (Jones 2015: 18). In a study of Georgian voters, Babunashvili's (2017) found a positive and statistically significant relationship between rural settlement and vote intention for Georgian Dream prior to the 2016 parliamentary elections. Thus, incumbent loyalty among rural voters translates to the following two hypotheses:

H_{3a}: Rural Armenian voters are more likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{3b}: Rural Georgian voters are more likely to vote for Georgian Dream.

As opposed to young voter and female voters, the rural residence of Armenian and Georgian respondents is said to positively influence their incumbent vote choice. Overall, all three sociodemographic vote determinants provide an incumbent-centric understanding of the vote choice among both electorates.

Socioeconomics

In post-Soviet republics, socioeconomic indicators have been considered central to political behavior. This is because the economic shock, that impacted most post-Soviet citizens after the collapse of the USSR, shifted many households from middle class-based socioeconomic status to an impoverished state. The 1990s witnessed an era of privatization, monetary devaluation, and the withdrawal of the social welfare state. In most cases, the privatization of

factories led to their liquidation and closure. Throughout the region, unemployment became rampant and income scarce. The distribution of "communal sphere services" – electricity, gas, and water – which were largely rent free during the Soviet Union, now required hefty payments (Collier and Way 2004). In turn, socioeconomically disenfranchised voters shifted their attention to the incumbent government, blaming them for their household's economic misfortune.

Education

The Soviet Union's legacy of universal access to education and near complete literacy rates created an electorate throughout the region that was disproportionately educated compared to Western as well as non-Western countries. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the higher educated Russian population became hostile to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and, instead, preferred right-wing parties (Colton 2000; Kolossov et al. 2003). This was primarily due to support of economic restructuring programs during the Yeltsin era, among the higher educated. Despite clear evidence of support for economic reforms, the relationship between educational attainment and support for Yeltsin is mixed (Clem and Craumer 1996; Colton 2000). Since the Putin presidency, the impact of educational attainment on a Putin vote appears to be null (Colton and Hale 2009; White and McAllister 2003).

In the Caucasus, the politicization of education has translated into an educative effect among the electorate, whereby higher educated voters tend to oppose the incumbent. The one exception to this was President Mikheil Saakashvili's first term (2004 – 2007). When Saakashvili successfully ousted the Shevardnadze regime, one of his first reforms was towards Georgia's education system. During the late 1990s, Shevardnadze had politicized the hiring of educational administrators and centralized educational institutions. By the time of the rose revolution, college students grew increasingly hostile toward Shevardnadze's policies and became a leading support

group for Saakashvili's presidential ambitions. The youth movement *Kmara*, which was established at Tbilisi State University in 2000, took their displeasure towards Georgia's education system to Tbilisi streets and found a natural ally in Saakashvili (Kandelaki and Meladze 2007). In turn, when Saakashvili became president he proceeded to depoliticized and decentralized the administrative structure of Georgia's education system (Tangiashvili and Slade 2014).

However, Saakashvili's second term (2008-2013) was marked by unilateral coercive actions and controversial policies, culminating with the police torture scandal.[39] This fractured his support among higher educated voters. Empirically, the loss of the educated support coalition was highlighted in Babunashvili's (2017) analysis of the Saakashvili's UNM party. The author was unable to find a statistically significant relationship between higher educated voters and support for UNM during the 2012 parliamentary election. The educative effect was also non-existent with support for Georgian Dream prior to the 2016 parliamentary election (Babunashvili 2017). However, following the consolidation of power by Georgia's new party of power and the party's patronal practices, we can assume that higher educated voters may be less supportive of Georgian Dream.

In Armenia, the politicization of education has created a similar counter effect. RPA's stronghold on educational administrators resulted in the entire system acting as a support coalition for the RPA. This in many ways paralleled Shevardnadze's policies. Both regimes pursued a top-down politicization model of extracting resources from educators (bribes, extortions, etc.) and using the system as a support coalition prior to elections. When Sargsyan

[39] In September 2012, video footage surfaced in Georgia showing prisoners being tortured by guards. This became a rallying cry for the opposition, Georgian Dream, who associated this act with Saakashvili's unilateral policies, which had created a culture of unaccountability within Georgian bureaucratic ranks.

resigned, Armenian airwaves broadcasted multiple educators who disclosed the coercive tactics of the RPA, including mandatory withholding of instructor bonuses to the RPA and mandating classrooms to RPA rallies.

In Armenia and Georgia, both parties of power have fostered a social environment whereby "individuals organize their political and economic pursuits primarily around personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments through chains of actual acquaintance…" (Hale 2015: 9-10). Naturally, social relations under a patronal environment are not conducive to meritocracy. As such, the economic value of higher education is influenced by one's "chains of acquittances." A higher educated individual who lacks a widening scope of acquittances realizes that the network of acquittances supersedes educational attainment in "political and economic pursuits." Thus, in patronal systems we can expect higher educated voters to orient their vote function against the incumbent:

H_{4a}: College educated Armenian voters are less likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{4b}: College educated Georgian voters are less likely to vote for Georgian Dream.

The dissatisfaction with the incumbent government among Armenian and Georgian voters applies to both recent college educated students as well as those who were educated during the Soviet era. This is because the value of their education is depressed by the sustainability of patronal politics. Higher educated voters view the current government as an impediment toward their economic mobility. As such, they are more likely to electorally punish the government than are voters who lack higher education.

Employment

In post-Soviet republics, the scarcity of job opportunities makes employment a source of satisfaction with the government. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the region has witnessed outward migration patterns from the Caucasus and Central Asian republics into Russia for employment purposes. Although today Russia maintains employment figures comparable with the West[40], its unemployment statistics were nearing double digits during the initial independence years (World Bank 2019). In Colton's (1996) study of the Russian electorate, unemployment was found to be a statistically significant predictor of the incumbent vote. Recent studies, however, have been unable to unearth a unidirectional relationship between unemployment and vote choice (Colton 2000; Treisman 2011; White and McAllister 2003). The shift in the predictive power of unemployment with the Russian electorate may be due to asymmetrical impact of unemployment within vote functions. It has been suggested elsewhere that unemployment is salient only to voters who perceive being unemployed or when the unemployment rate is considerably higher (Singer 2013). Thus, a gradual decrease in the number of Russians who are unemployed may have altered the relationship between unemployment and incumbent support.

In the Caucasus, the unemployment rate has constantly been in the double-digits. In fact, both Armenia's and Georgia's current rate of unemployment is higher than was Russia's at any time since the collapse of the USSR (see: World Bank 2019). Not surprisingly, jobs have consistently been rated by Armenian and Georgian voters as the most pressing issue facing their country (CRRC 2010; 2011; 2012; NDI 2016; Oganesyan 2017; 2018). Varying waves of the

[40] In recent years, Russia has averaged around five percent unemployment rate (OECD 2018).

Caucasus Barometer Survey as well as the 2016 GPAS and the 2017 ArmES arrive at a similar conclusion: that Armenian and Georgian voters are most concerned about jobs.

Given the abundance of unemployment in the region, the security of employment might then be a predictor of incumbent vote intention. This assumption becomes more solidified when we incorporate the influence of patronalism on employment opportunities. Since economic pursuits are based on a network of acquittances, many of those who are employed may owe their political allegiance to the government. Thus, they are more likely to be satisfied with the current government. In Georgia, an empirical study points to higher probability of a Georgian Dream voter among respondents who disclosed being employed (Babunashvili 2017). In Armenia, descriptive evidence points toward employed individuals preferring the incumbent government (SAS 2017).[41]

Based on the previously established link between employed voters and incumbent support, I hypothesize that:

H_{5a}: Employed Armenian voters are more likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{5b}: Employed Georgian voters are more likely to vote for Georgian Dream.

The above hypotheses do not take into consideration whether the employed Armenian or Georgian citizen votes for the incumbent out of free will or is coerced to do so. Although the coercive aspect of voting for the incumbent among employed voters has been speculated, the leadup to Armenia's 2017 parliamentary elections demonstrated that such practices are occurring. After the election, an audio recording was released of management from a well-known supermarket chain coercing its staff of not only vote for the RPA but to promise in

[41] https://armenianweekly.com/2017/04/14/sas-scandal/

writing to have their family and friends vote for the incumbent or risk being separated from their place of employment (SAS 2017).

Household Income

Household income is considered an important indicator of socioeconomic status and voter turnout (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In Russia, initial studies found that while income was not related to turnout (Wyman et al. 1995; Wyman 1996), household income was a significant predictor of the Yeltsin vote in the 1996 presidential election (Colton 2000). Not surprisingly, during Russia's period of economic instability, in the 1990s, higher household income was associated with support for Yeltsin. However, more recent work analyzing the impact of household income on the Putin vote has produced inconclusive results (White and McAllister 2003).

In the Caucasus, the scarcity of income elevates this socioeconomic vote predictor. While its impact on the vote choice is relatively unknown, we can speculate voting behavior traits between the Armenian and Georgian electorate based on theory of patronal politics and Caucasus Barometer data. According to the former, voters in Armenia and Georgia operate within a patronal environment whereby their material gains are attributable to their network of acquaintances. Since these networks are often times politicized, we can assume that voters with higher household incomes will prefer the incumbent. This is because the voters' acquaintance network is often allied with or prefers the government. Based on the theory of patronalism, we expect that:

H_{6a}: Armenian voters whose household income is in the top quartile are more likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{6b}: Georgian voters whose household income is in the top quartile are more likely to vote for the Georgian Dream.

Theoretically, patronalism fosters the connection between households with high incomes and support for the incumbent. However, upon further investigation it appears that economic affluent Armenian and Georgian voters may not be as favorable to the government as suggested above. In the 2015 Caucasus Barometer, forty-eight percent of Georgian respondents in the highest household income bracket disclosed distrustful attitudes toward the government.[42] In the 2017 Caucasus Barometer, sixty-two percent of Armenian respondents in the same income bracket disclosed a similar sentiment towards their government. Although trust in government differs from incumbent vote intention, the two are relatable. Thus, the below two hypotheses offer a counter assumption:

H_{6c}: Armenian voters whose household income is in the top quartile are less likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{6d}: Georgian voters whose household income is in the top quartile are less likely to vote for the Georgian Dream.

Party Identification

In western liberal democracies, the development of party identification is influenced by political socialization (Hyman 1959). This process occurs over several years and even decades. In the post-Soviet space, the emergence of party identification has been identified in several studies (e.g. Colton 2000; Miller et al. 2000; Miller and Klobucar 1999). Despite this, it is important to note that the political socialization process under which party identification

[42] Only three percent disclosed rather or full trust in their government.

flourishes has largely been absent in the region (Colton 2000). This is because party politics in the post-Soviet region is a relatively new occurrence that lacks transcendence across generations. Whereas in the West, party identification tends to be inherited from one's family (see: Campbell et al. 1960), most parties in post-Soviet republics have not existed beyond a few election cycles. This higher degree of party volatility limits the transferring of party identification from one familial generation to the next.

Another reason for the limitation of partisanship relates to the platforms of parties. In post-Soviet republics, many parties lack a coherent, positional and durable policy platform, and instead are vehicles of patronage that often address valence issues.[43] This minimizes the connection between a voter's issue proximity and that of the party. Instead, party identification may be due to a psychological attraction to the party leader. In fact, Wyman's (1996) analysis of early Russian elections demonstrated that voters preferred parties largely because of the party's leadership, instead of the party program. Thus, the process by which post-Soviet voters gain political attachments staunchly differs from what we witness in the West. Instead of a direct association between the voter and the party, we may speculate that this relationship is instead impacted by the party leader and party identification flourishes initially flourishes through a psychological attraction to the party leader.

In Russia, early analysis in the development of party identification produced two competing theoretical camps. The first posited that given the infant nature of Russia's political system, party identification would gradually emerge over time (Rose et al. 2001; White et al. 1997). The second camp contended that partisanship need not take decades to emerge and

[43] See Oganesyan (2018) https://www.evnreport.com/politics/back-to-the-future-the-2018-parliamentary-elections-and-the-armenian-voter

political behavior of Russians was in fact driven by partisan considerations (Brader and Tucker 2001; Miller and Klobucar 1999; Miller et al. 2000).[44] Evidence of partisanship in the vote choice was found in Russia's 1996 presidential election (Colton 2000). Colton not only identified the statistically significant role of partisanship in Yeltsin's vote function, but also in the vote choice for three opposition candidates, Zyuganov, Lebed, and Yavlinsky. A recent work by Colton and Hale (2015) expanded the analysis through 2008 and concluded the presence of co-partisan identity in the incumbent vote function of the Russian electorate.

In the Caucasus, the development of party identification has seldom been studied. That said, we can apply the near-universal influence of party identity to both Armenian and Georgian voters. Doing so, results in the following two hypotheses:

H_{7a}: Armenian voters who identify with the RPA are more likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{7b}: Georgian voters who identify with Georgian Dream are more likely to vote for the Georgian Dream.

In the two hypotheses above, I contend that voters in the Caucasus who identity with the incumbent party will be more likely to disclose a vote intent for the party. A limitation to the convergence between partisanship and the vote is the high level of party volatility in the region. However, the volatile party structure does not impact all parties equally. In fact, aside from incumbent parties, party volatility is dominant among opposition parties. Parties of power are the most durable political organizations in the region. The is evidenced by RPA's decades long governing mandate and Georgian Dream's near-decade long incumbency.

[44] Interestingly, much of the debate surrounding the development of partisanship and the varying degrees of partisanship in Russia was attributable to the specific phrasing of the party identification question (e.g. Brader and Tucker 2001).

Issues

The ability of voters to relate their issue perceptions to incumbent support is fundamental to the accountability thesis. In post-Soviet republics the economy has been the central focus of the electorate. The high degree of salience given to economic issues in post-Soviet republics is to be expected since the region has only recently recovered from the economic digression that occurred following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For much of the 1990s, the average post-Soviet citizen was economically worse off than they were during the Soviet Union. Despite the improving economic situation, wealth disparity is widespread throughout the region (See: Habibov 2012).

Economy

The impact of economic attitudes on the vote choice is among the largest subfields of voting behavior literature (See: Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2013). Economic dimensions of the vote are valence, positional, and patrimonial. Valence economic voting interprets the economy through a lens of general wellbeing. Here, the economy takes on a valence structure as voters prefer a good economy to a bad one (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2009; 2011). Positional economic voting encompasses issues where a distribution of position exists (e.g. taxation, interest rates, etc.) and voters prioritize their economic issues and positions. Thus, voters who prioritize unemployment over inflation will tend to support left-wing parties over right-wing parties. Finally, patrimonial economic voting posits an impact on the vote via asset ownership. Proponents of patrimonial voting contend that levels and types of asset ownership predict the vote choice. Specifically, maintaining large sums of assets and/or high-risk assets (e.g. stocks, businesses, etc.) result in voters preferring right-wing parties over left-wing parties (Nadeau et al. 2010; Persson and Martinsson 2016)

Perceptions of the economy can occur along four dimensions: retrospective, prospective, egotropic, and sociotropic.[45] When the electorate relies on retrospective or prospective measures of the economy, they are relating change in either past or upcoming economic attitudes with their vote choice. When voters rely on egotropic or sociotropic attitudes, they isolate changes in either their pocketbook or the national economy. In western liberal democracies, studies have found that voters generally rely on retrospective and sociotropic perceptions of the economy (Fiorina 1978; 1981; Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; 1981; Lewis-Beck 1986).[46]

In post-Soviet Russia, voters are driven by a mixture of all four economic voting dimensions.[47] For example, Colton's (1996) individual-level analysis of the 1995 Russian parliamentary election suggested that voters act as sociotropic voting agents. However, Hesli and Bashkirova's (2001) study of the Yeltsin vote between 1991 and 1997 concluded that voters are egotropic and prospective-oriented. Research analyzing the economic vote during Putin's presidency find that voters are sociotropic-oriented (Colton and Hale 2009; Rose 2007; Treisman 2014) and egotropic-oriented (Colton and Hale 2009; Treisman 2014). Treisman's (2009) analysis of the economic vote between the Yeltsin and Putin presidency suggests that the economy was a stronger determining factor for Yeltsin than for Putin due to the economic volatility experienced in the 1990s.

Besides Russia, the presence of economic voting has been observed in Ukraine. Bloom and Shulman (2011) modeled the economic vote during Ukraine's 2010 presidential election.

[45] The former two types relate to time, while the latter two types relate to space.
[46] Although scholars have pointed out the presence of pocketbook (Gomez and Wilson 2001) and prospective perceptions (MacKuen et al. 1992) in the vote choice, the wider research tends to conclude that voters rely on past perceptions of the national economy.
[47] One of the first studies to examine economic voting in the region was Duch's (1995) analysis of the economic vote and support for Gorbachev. Duch found that Soviet citizens were incumbent-oriented economic voters who relied on both retrospective and prospective measures of the pocketbook. However, the study was conducted during the Soviet Union and is does not necessarily fall within the post-Soviet period.

Using macro-level analyses, the authors found that unemployment rates hurt the incumbent, Victor Yushchenko. Interestingly, higher unemployment numbers also hurt Yushchenko's former orange revolution ally, Yulia Tymoshenko. These results suggest that along with the presence of economic voting within the incumbent vote function, the 2010 election was also a referendum on the outcomes of the orange revolution.

In the Caucasus, the impact of economic voting on the vote choice has been scarcely analyzed. To my knowledge, only Babunashvili (2017) and Turmanidze's (2017) work has analyzed traces of the economy in the vote function of the Georgian election.[48] However, neither work relies on a standard conceptualization of economic voting dimensions (e.g. retrospective, egotropic, etc.) and proper wording of questions relating to these dimensions. Instead, Babunashvili creates an index of short-term and long-term socioeconomic issues and models them against the incumbent vote function. The author operationalizes short-term factors as the job performance of the current government in relation to economic issues (e.g. agriculture, economy, pensions, etc.). Long-term factors are operationalized as the change in the same economic issues from the last election period. The author's findings suggest that Georgian voters are largely driven by 'short-term' economic factors.[49]

Turmanidze (2017) conducts can experimental study on the benefits of pre-electoral ambiguous campaign promises in Armenia and Georgia and finds the presence of grievance asymmetry in the political behavior of Georgian voters. Grievance asymmetry results when voters place more weight toward negative economic events than positive economic events. The

[49] This suggests a short time-horizon on the part of Georgian voters.

author finds that Georgians emphasize negative economic information over positive economic information.

Despite the scarcity of studies on economic perceptions in the Caucasus, the type of economic attitudes considered in here is within the scope of valence economic voting. Hence, I hypothesize respondents who disclose an increase in their economic wellbeing to be incumbent-oriented voter.

H_{8a}: Armenian voters who perceive a positive change in their prospective-egotropic attitudes are more likely to vote for the RPA.

H_{8b}: Georgian voters who perceive a positive change in their prospective-egotropic attitudes are more likely to vote for Georgian Dream.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined three theoretical foundations of voting behavior. All three perspective prescribe a different basis of the vote function. Of the mentioned theories, SPM has the widest depth when it comes to analyzing the vote choice of the electorate. The strength of SPM is the central role given to party identification as a predictor of the vote. Although partisan formation tends to be a gradual process that involves a larger experience of political socialization, this approach does not summarize political socialization and the development of partisanship in the post-Soviet space. After all, the level of party volatility in the region prevents the passing down of partisanship from one generation to the next (See Campbell et al. 1960). Thus, it may be suspect to what extent partisan identity influences the vote in the Caucasus.

In the next chapter, I outline the research design of the study. To account for party volatility in the region, I limit the vote choice to incumbent parties. These parties of power have

maintained a relatively stable presence in the past several elections. For example, the RPA has contested every election since 1995 and has been in a senior coalition member of government since 1999.[50] Georgian Dream, on the other hand, is a relatively new party of power and has been in government since 2012. Modeling the vote choice in Armenia and Georgia through an incumbent-centric lens corresponds to the set of incumbent-oriented hypotheses outlined in this chapter. Furthermore, it provides a stable example of two political parties whose lifecycles are not limited to a single election. In all, the impact of SPM on the vote choice for the Caucasus electorate can be properly measured through an incumbent-centric approach.

[50] The RPA joined government in 1995 as a junior coalition member. In the aftermath of the 1999 parliamentary election and the October terrorist attack on Armenia's national assembly, the RPA assumed the role of senior coalition member. Between 1999 and 2018, the RPA consecutively won elections and continued to hold the title of senior coalition member.

CHAPTER 3: MODELING THE POST-SOVIET VOTER

Political attitudes surveys are central to voter behavior studies.[51] In the post-Soviet republics, such surveys are vital towards analyzing political behavior and public opinion. The importance of individual-level survey analysis is furthered by the abundance of competitive authoritarian regimes in the region, which lessen the use of aggregate measures of elections since the actual incumbent vote share is often based on manufactured support or fraudulent ballots. In addition, aggregate measures of voter behavior produce homogeneous accounts of the electorate while unable to consider differences in voter attitudes. Relying on individual-based interviews avoids the issues of interval validity that dominant aggregate election studies.

In the previous chapter, I outlined the theoretical foundation of the socio-psychological voter behavior model and how the funnel-of-causality ultimately results in the vote choice. In this chapter, I apply each block within the funnel to analyze incumbent vote intention for both the Armenian and Georgian electorate. The rest of the chapter is divided into three parts. The first discusses the conventional methodological approaches adopted in previous works. Here I concentrate on pre- and post-electoral surveys and block recursive modeling as a method of incorporating both long-term and short-term vote predictors. The second section then models the post-Soviet voter by first discussing the contents of both ArmES and GPAS and then the relevant data within each survey. Since both surveys were administered prior to each election, I am interested in modeling the predictors of vote intention. I rely on both sociological and psychological factors to predict the incumbent vote intention of the Armenian and Georgian

[51] Today, most studies that seek to analyze voter behavior rely on political attitudes or election study surveys. Prior to the adoption of surveys, voting behavior studies were primarily driven by historical analysis of parties, policy positions and campaigns (Niemi and Weisberg 1993).

electorate. The final section summarizes the research design of the dissertation and lays out the path of the subsequent empirical chapters.

Conventional Methodological Approaches

Since first incorporated by advocates of the Columbia school, surveys have been a central tool for voting behavior scholars. In such studies, the use of surveys serves at least four important functions. First, they allow the researcher to avoid making an ecological fallacy, which results in individual-based inferences made from aggregate, country-wide data. Reliance on territorial-unit observations (province or country) to make inferences about voting behavior is problematic because the unit of analysis does not consider behavioral traits of voters. Political attitudes surveys circumvent this problem by observing the political behavior of voters themselves.

Second, the availability of surveys allows researchers to avoid making inferences about the homogenized voter. Not only do aggregate level studies commit an ecological fallacy, such inquiries are also unable to distinguish between voter types and thus imply that the electorate is homogeneous. Since the introduction of political attitudes surveys, scholars have been able to demonstrate the multidimensionality of the vote and present arguments for a heterogeneous account of the electorate.[52]

Third, political attitude surveys allow researchers to measure the change in attitudes between election cycles. This process begins with a pre-electoral survey that samples given

[52] For example, in voter behavior research it has been assumed that voters are largely sociotropic decision-makers. That is, they base their perceptions of the economy on national trends, rather than pocketbook changes (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; 1981). Using political attitudes surveys, subsequent works have argued for pocketbook voting with certain types of voters, including political sophisticates (Gomez and Wilson 2001) and financially-scarce voters (Singer and Carlin 2013).

households about the political environment prior to election day. A percentage of households who agree to be re-interviewed are then revisited following the election. This panel-structured surveying method allows researchers to not only measure the impact of the campaign season but also analyze the durability of issue preferences and candidate evaluations.

Finally, surveys allow researchers to test the relationship between subjective perceptions and objective measures. For example, changes in respondent perceptions of the national economy should relate to macroeconomic swings. This analysis is key to uncovering a potential dysconnectivity between the actual politico-economic shifts and whether voters correctly of incorrectly perceive them.

Pre-electoral Surveys

Pre-electoral studies survey the public prior to an election. This method presents both advantages as well as challenges to the overall political behavior of the electorate. One advantage is the stimulus effect, whereby participation in the survey boosts voter turnout. Advocates of the stimulus effect point toward the survey as an activating agent of political interest among the participants. Thus, engaging respondents with election-centric questionnaires "stimulates" their interest in the upcoming election (Clausen 1968; Yalch 1976; Granberg and Holmberg 1992). The stimulus effect, however, does not impact all respondents equally. Granberg and Holmberg (1992) point towards asymmetrical effects between low-interest and high-interest respondents. Specifically, they suggest that the stimulus effect is more evident among individuals that have higher levels of political interest.

Pre-electoral surveys, however, also present some challenges. First, respondents who partake in such surveys may already be high interest individuals, compared to the average

citizen. The ability to partake or optout from an electoral survey may be systemically related to one's interest in politics. Thus, individuals who refuse to participate are those that are of low political interest. Another challenge is accounting for the over-reporting of turnout rates that occur in pre-electoral surveys (e.g. Clausen 1968; Marsh 1985; Trauggott and Katosh 1979). Survey turnout rates are considerably higher than actual turnout rates. As such, the challenge in pre-electoral surveys that contain higher turnout rates is figuring out whether the imbalance is due to respondent selection or social desirability bias.[53]

Scholars who rely on pre-electoral studies are often interested in the *vote intention* of the electorate. In other words, the voting question that is asked is prospective. For example, '*if elections were held tomorrow for whom would you vote?'* Because the survey is pre-electoral, the question cannot ask for the actual vote since the act has not yet occurred. For the research design, the *vote intention* question presents some advantages. First, it is less likely to be impacted by response bias. In a post-electoral survey, the vote question that tends to be asked is the *actual* vote. For example, '*in the election held on date X, which party did you vote for?'* At first glance, an *actual vote* question may seem methodologically superior to a *vote intention* question. If we are trying to obtain voting behavior information, asking how one voted in retrospect is preferable than asking how one would vote in a futuristic date. However, the *actual vote* question has been plagued by inaccurate responses. In fact, an important issue associated with election surveys is the overestimation of the winner's vote share. This 'halo effect' was evident in the first batch of surveys analyzing post-Soviet Russian voter behavior (Wyman et al. 1995). Since the winner is

[53] Advocates of respondent selection bias contend that individuals who elect to be interviewed are already politically active individuals who are more likely to vote than individuals who refuse to partake in surveys (Traugott and Katosh 1979). Advocates of the social desirability bias contend that individuals face social pressure to respond in the affirmative when asked whether they intend to vote.

unknown in a pre-electoral survey, the respondent's vote choice is more likely to be accurate. Another advantage of presenting a 'voter intention' question is being able to track changes into the respondent's vote calculus as the election nears. Early pre-electoral surveys assumed a panel-structure and tracked the changes in responses as the election neared (see Lazarsfeld et al. 1948). Periodically revisiting the same respondent allows surveyors to measure how political messages and other external events impact the vote choice. A further refinement of this approach includes combination of pre- and post-electoral studies. Today, this is the standard approach in several election studies, including the American National Election Study (ANES). The advantage of this approach is that researchers can revisit the respondent following an election and analyze the presence of post-electoral changes in their sentiment and perceptions.

Block Recursive Modeling

The inclusion of voting behavior-related questions from surveys parallels the funnel-of-causality approach laid out in the previous chapter. According to the authors of *The American Voter*, the vote function is a combination of both sociological and psychological variables. The fact that the funnel-of-causality approach comprises of a hierarchical set of both sociological and psychological factors complements block recursive modeling. Like a nested regression technique, block recursive modeling consists of isolating exogenous variables from endogenous ones and introducing the former followed by the latter in varying blocks. In voter behavior studies, each block corresponds to each set of variables within the funnel (see Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Applying the funnel of causality via a block recursive model results in several subsets of equations that are interrelated. For instance, the first block contains sociodemographic and socioeconomic vote predictors.

$$Vote = f(sociodemographic\ indicators, socioeconomic\ indicators)$$

The above equation isolates the impact of the exogeneous variables. Both sociodemographic and socioeconomic indicators are considered long-term indicators of the vote. This suggests that we do not expect to see much change in their impact on the vote function from election to election. For example, in the United States an individual who is deeply religious and relates religious doctrine to political opinion will be more likely to prefer the Republican party and vote for the party's nominee. The association of religious views with party vote choice rarely alters from one election to the next.

$$Vote = f(sociodemographic\ indicators, socioeconomic\ indicators, partisanship)$$

After including sociological vote determinants, the next 'block' incorporates political anchor variables. Partisanship is one of two anchor variables used to predict the vote.[54] The inclusion of partisanship in the vote function adds a socio-psychological vote component. Partisans attachment is a psychological process that, when developed, tends to remain stable from one election to the next. Thus, it too is considered a long-term vote predictor. In western liberal democracies it is quite common for voters to maintain a specific party preference throughout much of their lives. The anchoring effect of partisanship goes beyond sociological predictors. Party attachment can also influence that way an individual assesses the political, economic, and social world. Referred to as partisan rationalization, or the process of rationalizing issues, events, etc. through a partisan lens, this phenomenon is how many voters perceive social, economic, and political issues and events. For example, an individual preferring the incumbent party will be less critical of the government for a bad economy than someone whose party preference lies with the opposition.

[54] The other being ideology.

$$Vote = f(sociodemographic, socioeconomic\ indicators, partisanship, issues)$$

Below partisanship, we find social and economic issues. We can divide them into two groups: valence and positional (see: Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2011; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013). Valence issues are those which enjoy a consensus in public opinion. We can think of such examples as the overall health of the economy, corruption, and crime. Voters prefer a healthy economy to a distressful economy; a less corrupt society to a corrupt society; and a crime-free society to a crime abundant society. Positional items, on the other hand, are issues which divide public opinion and require voters to take a distinct policy position. For example, the larger economy is a valence issue. However, when addressing certain aspects of the economy, such as taxation, a consensus does not exist. Although everyone prefers a healthy economy toward a distressful one, voters differ about the issue of taxing the public. Some prefer a progressive policy, while others prefer a flat taxation policy. Positional items are important because one's position is highly influential on their voting behavior. An individual who prefers a flat taxation system over a progressive one may be inclined to support a party or candidate that shares her or his policy preference.

$$Vote = f(sociodemographic, socioeconomic, partisanship, issues, candidate)$$

The final block relates to one's perception of the candidates. Practically, the evaluation of candidates is a direct determinant of one's vote function. Voters who negatively evaluate a candidate are less likely to vote for the candidate than voters who positively evaluate a candidate. Overall then, SPM relies on sociological and psychological traits of the voter. Its approach is illustrated through a funnel consisting out outer and inner layers. The former are sociological factors. These exogeneous indicators then impact partisanship, the anchor of the vote.

Partisanship acts as a *rationalizing* force that then influences issues and candidate evaluation. Ultimately, the funnel's output is the vote.

Modeling the post-Soviet Voter

Cross-national survey research in the post-Soviet region is scarce when compared to other, developing areas. Although regional studies have existed, most analyses have been single-country studies that have concentrated on the Russian electorate.[55] On the eve of post-Soviet independence, two region-wide surveys were implemented by political scientists. The *Survey of Soviet Values (SSV)*, conducted by Raymond Duch and James Gibson (1990), was a study performed in nine of the fifteen Soviet republics[56] to measure commitment to democracy and political participation.[57] The SSV was an unprecedented study that relied on contemporary measures of voter behavior by including sociological and psychological predictors. The SSV became part of the larger *Panel Study of Political Values in the Former Soviet Union (PVFSU)*, which included the original SSV and a subsequent analysis undertaken in 1992.[58]

The second study, organized by Arthur Miller and colleagues, was limited to three republics: Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine. The *New Soviet Citizen Survey* consisted seven rounds undertaken between 1990 and 2000.[59] The questions within each wave had a specific theme. For example, the 1990 wave was titled, 'problems of peace and security'. The survey provided some tenants of voting behavior, including perceptions of the economy and political parties.

[55] Some notable examples include, Duch and Gibson's (1990) Panel Study of Political Values in the Former Soviet Union, Miller, Reisinger, and Hesli's (1990-2000) New Soviet Citizen survey, and Colton, Zimmerman, and Hale's (1995-2012) Russian Election Study (RES)
[56] Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine.
[57] Some 1,559 individuals were interviewed across the nine Soviet republics during Spring 1990.
[58] The PVFSU consisted of the original 1990 study in which 1,551 individuals were interviewed and a 1992 study in which 4,309 individuals were interviewed. Between the two samples, some 698 were interviewed in both samples (thus were panel interviews).
[59] 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1997, 1998, and 2000.

Specifically, Miller and colleagues used the series of surveys to address party development in the three post-Soviet republics (Miller and Klobucar 2000; Miller and Klobucar 2003; Miller et al. 2000). That said, the main drawback of the *New Soviet Citizen Survey* series was the failure to include items relating to actual voting behavior.

In the Caucasus, the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) undertook a decade-long project, the Caucasus Barometer (2008-2017), which sampled individuals in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Each sample consisted of cross-national as well as country-specific questionnaires. The cross-national portion of the survey addressed topics related to socioeconomic development and social interactions. The survey included several questions related to political institutions, including trust in government. One issue with the responses was, in the case of Azerbaijan, the lack of variability. For example, when asked about trust in President Aliyev, around eighty-four percent of respondents reported somewhat or full trust in repeated waves. The survey did not include questions relating to political behavior, specifically vote intention, partisanship, and other indicators. Overall, the Caucasus Barometer provided an unprecedented insight into the social interactions of Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijanis. That said, the survey failed to engage respondents with the necessary questions about their political life and partisan orientation.

The Armenian Election Study (Oganesyan 2017; 2018) is a recent survey implemented by the author.[60] An in-depth measure of electoral behavior, ArmES is the first election study implemented in the landlocked Caucasus republic. Currently, the survey consists of two pre-election waves, both occurring prior to the country's parliamentary elections. The second, 2018,

[60] Assisted by the American University of Armenia.

wave of the survey was structured to (1) revisit the original panel survey in 2017, (2) analyze perceptions of Armenia's velvet revolution, and (3) expand the sample size. Despite the two waves, I rely on respondent information gathered from the 2017 survey.

Survey analysis in the post-Soviet region has not been limited to scholars. Both the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) have actively sought survey analysis in the region. The latter has implemented survey work in Georgia since at least 2010. While not an election study in the traditional sense, the NDI's periodical GPAS has from time to time used questionnaires relating to voting behavior. One such wave occurred in June 2016, fourth months prior to the 2016 parliamentary election. To analyze the vote function of the Georgian electorate, I relied on this particular wave as it included the many of the questions central to an election study. Below, I discuss the contents of each survey.

2017 Armenian Election Study

The 2017 ArmES included thirty-five questions divided into seven sections. The first section addressed sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of respondents. To make sure respondents qualified for the survey, the first two questions were related to age and citizenship. If the respondent was under eighteen years of age and/or not an Armenian citizen, then the interview was terminated. The second section addressed political, economic, and social issues. Specifically, I analyzed issue salience and perceptions of the economy. The third section contained questions relating to partisanship and partisan intensity. The fourth section addressed vote intention and the fairness of Armenia's electoral process. The fifth section contained questions relating to alternative types of voter behavior, including patronal voting. The sixth section addressed the issue of corruption, including whether respondents perceived corruption driven by supply, demand, or both. The final section centered on gender and politics. Here

respondents were asked about the role and performance of women in Armenia's parliament. This was included in light of Armenia's revised laws on gender quotas.

Initially, the questionnaire was created in English and discussed with members of the research team at the American University of Armenia (AUA). To ensure comparison between both samples, I borrowed the exact wording of GPAS questionnaires relating to vote intention and perceptions of the economy and corruption. I held several working group discussions with the ArmES research team. After this, I worked with the AUA staff to properly translate each question into Armenian. Since the theoretical foundations of the survey are based on western case studies, it was important to ensure the proper translation of certain phrases, including egotropic voting, sociotropic voting, etc. Prior to the start of the survey, the research team conducted several rounds of pre-sampling.

The telephone survey sampled one-thousand sixty-two households between March 14th and March 31st, 2017.[61] The time-period was chosen to narrowly precede the April 2nd election date, thus minimizing any changes in voter perceptions and political behavior. The method of phone number selection was implemented through random digit dialing (RDD). To account for respondents with landline phones and mobile phones, as well as non-responses, an initial list of one-thousand landline phones and one-thousand cellular phones was generated. To imitate the demographic distribution of the country, the distribution of landline phone interviews occurred in the following manner: Forty-percent of the landline phone interviews occurred in Yerevan, while

[61] The duration of the entire study lasted from March 1st to March 31st. The first two weeks contained surveyor training and the conduction of a pretest and its subsequent analyses. The actual survey began on March 14 and lasted approximately two weeks. The survey was supervised by Jenny Paturyan, PhD and Valentina Gevorgyan. To ensure that the study was completed in the necessary time, the survey team consisted of multiple political science graduate students of AUA.

sixty-percent of the landline phone interviews occurred in Armenia's ten provinces ('Marzes').[62] To imitate the demographic distribution of mobile phone carriers, the research team mirrored the statistics of mobile phone carriers. In Armenia, there are three mobile phone operators. The most voluminous is Vivacell MTS with approximately sixty-one percent of mobile subscribers; followed by Beeline with approximately twenty-five percent of mobile subscribers; followed by Ucom with approximately fourteen percent of mobile subscribers. To mimic this distribution, 610 Vivacell, 250 Beeline, and 140 Ucom phones numbers were generated.[63] Finally, to ensure that the assignment of phone numbers was a randomized process, a random number generator was used.[64] Each member of the survey team was required to make up to three attempts to contact the generated phone number.[65] The criteria for respondent inclusion was that the respondent be (1) at least eighteen years old and (2) a citizen of the Republic of Armenia. These two conditions ensured that the respondent was able to vote.

The use of a telephone survey was due to the inexpensive cost and the abundance of phone subscriptions in the land-locked country. A 2014 'Freedom on the Net' Report (FreedomHouse 2014) listed 3.35 million mobile phone subscriptions, exceeding the total population of the country. This does not necessarily mean that every Armenian citizen owns a mobile phone; such an empirical conclusion is unrealistic unless one samples the entire population. It does suggest, however, the abundance of mobile phone usage in the country.

[62] The territory of Armenia is comprised of eleven administrative districts. This includes ten provinces ('Marzes') and the capital city of Yerevan. Since Yerevan maintains a distinct administrative status, it is not included in any of the ten provinces.
[63] Armenian mobile companies have distinct phone codes that associates each number with the subscriber. For example, the following mobile phone codes are associated with the leading mobile provider, Vivacell: 077, 093, 094, and 098. Thus, if a mobile phone number begins with either one of the four codes then that phone number is part of the Vivacell network.
[64] The research team relied on https://www.random.org website to generate random phone digits.
[65] To merit multiple attempts, the survey team had to receive a request to call at a later time or date; the respondent is unavailable; a busy line; or the respondent fails to answer the phone.

Telephone surveys also present some challenges to accurately sample respondents. First, telephone surveys must find the proper mix of landline and mobile phone numbers to be representative of the populations' use of telecommunication services. The ArmES was able to obtain an aggregate report of telecommunication subscribers from each company. However, a sociodemographic report of each user was unavailable.

Second, telephone surveys must balance the scarcity of telecommunications in rural areas with the abundance of them in urban areas. Throughout the post-Soviet space, many rural areas contain *frozen infrastructure* from the Soviet period. Thus, some communities have all together abandoned landlines and transitioned into mobile telecommunication. Fortunately, Armenia's large mobile communication market allowed the research team to minimize the impact of inoperable landlines.

Third, telephone surveys also need to properly account for the balance in the landline and mobile market. For example, if most Armenian mobile users rely on VivaCell, instead of Beeline and UCom, then the sample should mirror this. An aggregate user report from each telecommunication provider allowed the research team to properly distribute the samples across landline and mobile respondents.

Fourth, reliance on telephone surveys excludes specific socioeconomic groups of individuals who do not own a landline or mobile phone, while oversampling social groups that are more likely to own a specific type of telecommunication device. For example, groups that have been found to be underrepresented include elderly, low-income, and low-education potential respondents. At the opposite end, young individuals have been oversampled using an RDD technique (Green and Krosnick 1999).

Fifth, telephone surveys tend to have a 'no-opinion' response bias, where respondents quite frequently select non-response options (Green and Krosnick 1999). The tendency to select non-response items can severely impact the distribution of responses, especially if the preference of non-responses is not randomly distributed among respondents. In ArmES, non-responses with political questions became an issue throughout the implementation of the survey.

Finally, reliance on the Armenian mobile market presents some challenges. For instance, there is no clear way to differentiate between a non-working number and a number that is not in-service range. This creates issues in attempting to reach individuals who are out of the reception area. To circumvent this problem, the surveyors were tasked with repeatedly calling a specific number (up to three times) in different dates.

2016 Georgian Public Attitudes Survey

The 2016 GPAS was conducted by the NDI.[66] The duration of the survey lasted from June 8th to July 6th, 2016 and four-thousand one-hundred thirteen individuals were interviewed. The Georgian survey occurred four months prior to the October 8th, 2016 election. The GPAS analyzed a national representative sample of Georgians in rural and urban settings, across Georgia's nine regions ("*mkhare"*). Contrary to ArmES, the method of respondent contact in GPAS was coordinated via face-to-face interviews. The respondent selection process began with CRRC choosing Georgian voting precincts at random. Once locations were picked, interviewers were sent to selected households. The Kish grid was used to isolate respondents. Once a household was identified, interviewers conducted the survey and digitally recorded responses. In all, some 4,113 individuals were interviewed for the GPAS survey.

[66] NDI subcontracted the survey work to CRRC. While CRRC conducted the interview process and gathered the data, NDI retrieved the data.

As mentioned above, the GPAS was conducted using face-to-face surveying technique. Face-to-face surveys are considered preferential to telephone surveys. However, in many cases the cost of conducting a cross-national face-to-face survey forces researcher to rely on the less-costly option of telephone surveys. That said, face-to-face surveys are preferred for the following reasons: First, in-person surveys are less likely to result in non-response bias. Non-responses consist of individuals who fail to complete the survey, those that refuse to participate, and those that are systematically left out of the sample pool (Keeter et al. 2006). Relying on a telephone surveys can lead to greater likelihood of rejections because the surveyor may call individuals during work hours, vacation, or other periods when the respondent is outside of their domicile residence. Face-to-face surveys tend to be conducted at the primary residence of the respondent and thus have a higher likelihood of completion. In a meta-analysis of some forty-five studies that assessed response rates in face-to-face and telephone surveys, Hox and De Leeuw (1994) found that the former had significantly higher response rates than the latter. In the case of Armenia and Georgia, non-response rates were much higher with the Armenian sample than the Georgian, furthering the claim made by the Hux and De Leeuw.

Second, face-to-face surveys are not bound by the limitation of telecommunications lines and coverage. Whereas telephone-based surveys will be unable to reach a specific geospatial area that lacks telecommunication lines, face-to-face surveys circumvent the issues associated with phone-line accessibility (Blumberg and Luke 2006). As mentioned earlier, the limitation of telecommunication can severely impact the representative sample of the survey and compromise any generalizations made about a voter group.

Third, face-to-face surveys avoid a variety of negative externalities associated with conducting the survey. For example, Holbrook et al. (2003) found that respondents in telephone

surveys complained about the length of interviews at higher rates than face-to-face interviews of the same time. Furthermore, the level of disengagement with the survey is higher with telephone interviews than with face-to-face interviews. Another negative externality that is minimized with face-to-face surveys is the impact of social desirability bias among respondents (Holbrook et al. 2003).

Data and Parameter Estimation: Dependent Variable

The present study relies a standard operationalization of the dependent variable: incumbent vote intention. The ArmES and GPAS include a standard vote intention question which asked respondents, *if 'X' parliamentary elections were held tomorrow, what party would you vote for?* The Armenian sample included a list of nine parties and pre-electoral coalitions, while the Georgian sample included a list of seventeen parties and pre-electoral coalitions.[67] Figures 3.1 illustrates the distribution of respondent's vote intention for the Armenian sample. Notice that most respondents disclosed a non-response by selecting either 'don't know', 'refused to answer', or 'nobody'. Figure 3.2 omits the non-responses and only includes the distribution of party responses. Not surprisingly, Armenian voters were largely divided between two political groups: RPA and Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP). Interestingly, only twenty-seven respondents disclosed a vote for the Yelk alliance, an opposition bloc led by current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, which cruised to election victory in December 2018 with almost seventy-percent of the vote.[68]

[67]Compared to Armenia, Georgia has had larger number of political parties vying for representation in parliament. This is partially due to the Georgia's regime type – unstable competitive authoritarianism – which tends to produce unstable winning coalitions and larger number of parties competing during an election season.

[68] The dramatic change in support for Pashinyan between 2017 and 2018 demonstrates the shift of Armenian voters. One reason for this swing may be the collapse of the country's party of power (RPA) and the emergence of a new party of power around Pashinyan (My Step Alliance).

Figure 3.1: Distribution of Armenian Vote Intention

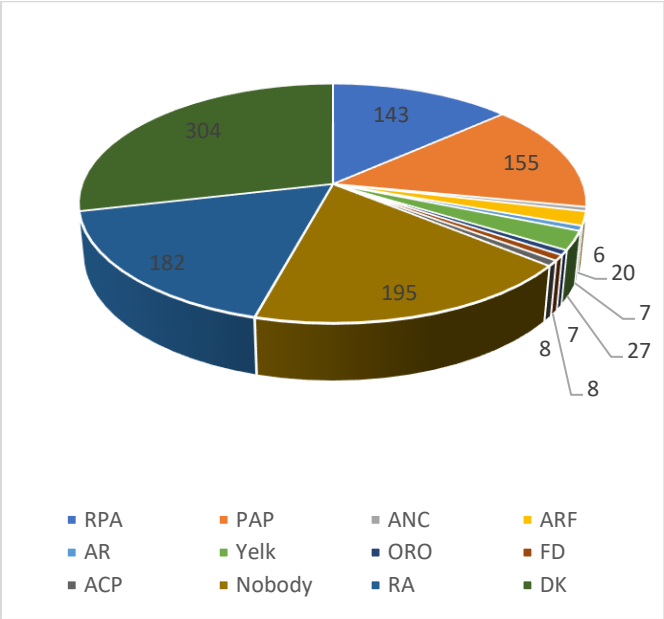
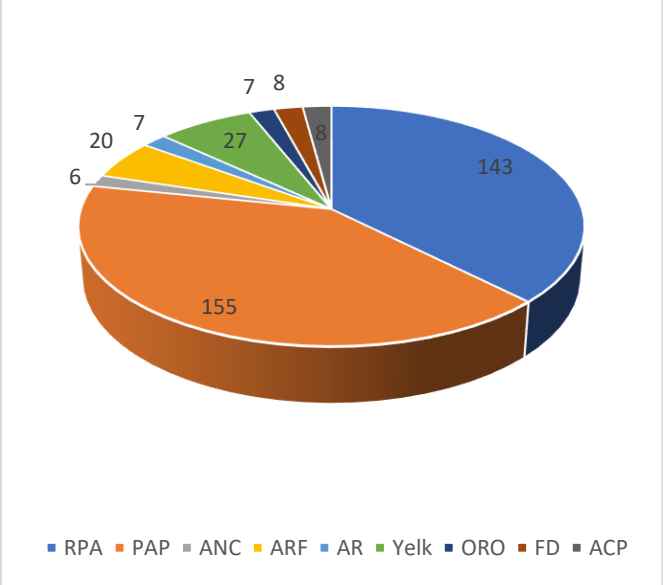


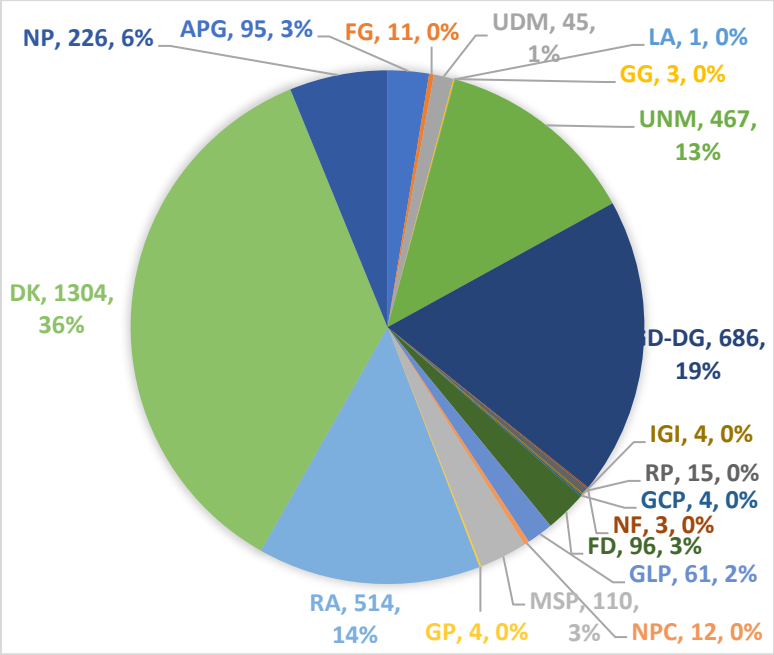
Figure 3.2: Distribution of Armenian Vote Intention (DK, RA, NB excluded)



Figures 3.3 and 3.4 report the distribution for the Georgian electorate. Since the onset of independence, Georgian elections have been marked by considerable amount of political parties

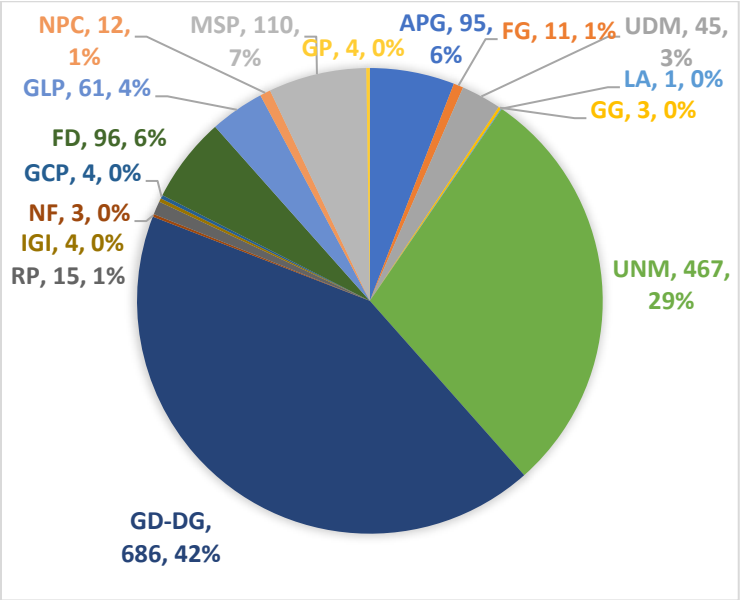
contesting elections. For example, the 1992 parliamentary election saw some forty-seven parties competing for legislative seats. Thus, it is not surprising that a higher amount of parties contested the 2016 Georgian parliamentary election, then the 2017 Armenian parliamentary election. Although the number of parties contesting elections is different, the presence of non-responses in the Georgian samples mirrors the Armenian sample. In the Georgian context, almost fifty percent of respondents selected either 'don't know', 'refused to answer', or 'nobody'. The large number of non-responses for a vote intention question is quite common in the post-Soviet region. This may stem from a lack of ideological competition among the parties and/or the hesitancy of respondents to disclose information related to their political preferences. In fact, many voters in developing countries are hesitant to disclose their political opinion to surveyors due to fear of being persecuted.[69]

Figure 3.3: Distribution of Georgian Voter Intent



[69] In Armenia, respondents are also hesitant in disclosing their political opinion because many of them associate surveyors with the party of power or an international organization that, they believe, seeks to influence their opinion.

Figure 3.4: Distribution of Georgian Voter Intent (DK, RA, NB excluded)



To isolate a vote intention for the incumbent party, I recoded response values to resemble a binary distribution. The incumbent vote intention variable assumed a '1' if the respondent disclosed a vote for the incumbent party (The RPA for the Armenian sample and the Georgian Dream for the Georgian sample). The variable assumed a '0' if the respondent disclosed a vote for any other party.[70] A central issue with the voter intention data is the number of non-responses. In the Armenian sample, 486 individuals either refused to answer the question or answered, 'don't know'. Moreover, some 195 individuals answered, 'nobody'. This puts the total number of respondents who selected a party choice at 381. In the Georgian sample, 1,818 individuals either refused to answer the question or answered, 'don't know'. An additional 226 respondents choose 'no party'. Overall, some 1,627 (out of 3,671) disclosed a party choice.

[70] Respondents who answered, 'don't know', 'no party', or 'refused to answer' were included in the opposition category and assigned a '0'.

Conventionally, previous works have either recoded non-responses as '0' or omitted all or some of the non-responses (e.g. Bratton et al. 2012; Nadeau et al. 2017). However, with the pair of surveys, omitting these responses would severely limit the sample size. More importantly, it will increase case selection bias. Thus, I recoded the three non-party responses and assigned each response '0'.[71] In Appendix A, I report the results of alternative coding structures. Interestingly, omitting the non-responses increases the magnitude of the anchor and economic covariates. Alternatively, another route is to code these items separately and estimate incumbent vote intention using an ordered logit model, combining the non-party responses with opposition voters increases the significance threshold, provides a conservative estimation of the likelihood of an incumbent vote, and makes the results evermore significant. It may very well be the case that many undecided voters ultimately chose to vote for the incumbent party. That said, treating such values as a '0', rather than a'1', provides for a stronger link between sociological and psychological indicators and the vote.

Data and Parameter Estimation: Independent Variables

A total of nine covariates are used to predict incumbent vote intention. These nine variables can be grouped into four categories mirroring the funnel of causality: sociodemographic attributes, socioeconomic indicators, partisanship, and issues. I recoded each variable to complement the hypothesized effect laid out in the previous chapter.

The sociodemographic variables consist of age, sex, and geographical residence. Initially age was coded as a four-item categorical variable: 18 to 34; 35 to 50; 51 to 69; 70 and above.

[71] In voting behavior works, a debate exists as how best to code 'don't know' and 'refused to answer' responses. In Bratton et al.'s (2012) study of the African voter and Nadeau et al.'s (2017) study of the Latin American voter, these non-responses are omitted from the model. In Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier's (2016) work on the Hispanic immigrant voter, only refusals are omitted from the model. For robustness purposes, I have included both the omission and selective omission methods in Appendix A.

These four groups were used to differentiate between young, middle-aged and elderly voters. Aside from a categorical coding, I also recoded age as a binary variable to measure the impact of being a post-Soviet respondent. I coded a post-Soviet respondent as one who was born in 1990 and beyond. Thus, respondents who fit this threshold were assigned a '1', while respondents born before 1990 were assigned a '0'. The reason for coding age as a dichotomous variable is that the original categorical coding may not tease out the impact of being a post-Soviet citizen. As mentioned in Chapter Two, I expect age to be negatively associated with incumbent vote intention. More specifically, I posit that younger individuals who were born in a post-Soviet period lack the Soviet legacy of patronal politics will be more critical of the incumbent government.

The second sociodemographic indicator, sex, is coded as a binary variable taking on a '1' if the respondent is female and '0' if the respondent is a male. This coding structure allows me to test hypothesis H_{2a} and $H_{2b,}$ which posit that females will be less likely to vote for the incumbent party due to the patriarchal nature of both patronal systems. Although the introduction of gender quotas has increased female representation in Armenia's and Georgia's national assembly, the patronal structure in both countries continues to be dominated by male chief patrons and sub-patrons. I content that this may create an anti-incumbency effect with female voters.

The final sociodemographic indicator, residence, is coded as a binary variable taking on a '1' if the respondent resides in a rural area. Recall that hypothesis H_{3a} and H_{3b} claim that rural voters would be more likely to support RPA and Georgian Dream. This is because both incumbent parties have relied on rural areas as the base of their support through the influence of sub-patrons. Interestingly, the 2016 GPAS provided respondents with four choices about their settlement: capital, urban, rural, and non-Georgian. This choice distinguishes the capital, Tbilisi,

from other urban areas. More importantly, the response items differentiate between Georgian and non-Georgian settlements. The heterogeneous composition of ethnicities in Georgia has resulted in non-Georgian communities residing in specific regions. For example, Armenian minorities in Georgia tend to reside in *Samtskhe-Javakheeti* region, whereas Azerbaijani minorities tend to reside in and around the *Kvemo Kartli* region. To mirror the responses of the Georgian sample, the residence questionnaire in the ArmES separated urban settlement between the capital and other urban areas. However, due to the ethnic and religious homogeneity in Armenia[72], I did not include a non-Armenian settlement response item.

The socioeconomic indicators consist of education, employment status, and household income. In both Armenia and Georgia, the primary and secondary education system has changed numerous times since the independence of both countries. Currently, both educational systems have a comparable progression track. Students are given a choice to either enter a k-9 or k-12 educational system. When completing the former, a student may choose to continue their education and enroll at a particular technical college. Followed by this, the student can then advance to a university-level education. Alternatively, one can choose the k-12 track and upon completing it, apply to the university. Thus, the k-9 route uses technical college as a substitute for the latter two years of school. Since both surveys account for the completion of technical college, I code education as a binary variable indicating whether the respondent completed higher education. I define higher education completion as completion of a technical college or a university. Here, I assume that individuals who obtain a higher education will be less likely to

[72] Armenia is considered one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in the world with ninety-eight percent of the country's residents being ethnic Armenians.

vote for the incumbent government. This is due to the limited value of education in a patronal system.

The second socioeconomic variable, employment status, is coded as a binary variable indicating whether the respondent is employed. The 2016 GPAS first asked respondents whether they considered themselves employed. If the respondent answered no, then a second question was asked about their primary activity.[73] The 2017 ArmES asked respondents, *are you employed? If not, are you retired, not looking for a job, or unemployed?* Although the exact wording of the question differs between the two surveys, both surveys isolate employed respondents from the rest.[74] Thus, coding a respondent who is employed as a '1' and the rest '0' allows me to compare employed Armenians with employed Georgians and their impact on incumbent vote intention. According to hypotheses H_{5a} and H_{5b}, employed respondents will be more likely to vote for the incumbent. This is due to the politicization of both public and private employment in Armenia and Georgia. While merit-based employment exists throughout the Caucasus, both Armenia and Georgia also contain a widespread nepotistic culture that has become intertwined with the patronal system. Thus, employment status may result in both the satisfaction with as well as the preference of the incumbent party.

The final socioeconomic variable, household income, is coded as a binary variable. The 2016 GPAS asked respondents about their household income in the previous month. The response items were coded in Georgian Lari (GEL) and ranged between no income to more than

[73] The response items included, being unemployed and looking for a job; being unemployed and interested in a job, but currently not looking; being unemployed and not interested in looking for a job; being a student; being a housewife; being retired and looking for a job; being retired and interested in a job but currently not looking; being retired and not interested in looking for a job; being disabled; and other.
[74] This is because both questions begin by asking whether the respondent is employment and then moving onto the next categories.

1600 GEL. To draw comparisons between Armenian and Georgian household income, the household income item in the 2017 ArmES was partially based on the income ranges in the 2016 GPAS. This was done by first converting each category to US Dollars and then creating an approximate range of values for the Armenian sample to match the values in the Georgian sample. In the 2017 ArmES, the household income questionnaire included response items ranging from 'up to 50,000 Armenian Drams (AMD)' to over '700,000 AMD'. Hypothesis H_{6a} and H_{6b} suggest that higher income households will be more likely to vote for the incumbent. Instead of translating the original ordinal scale into the study, I recoded the income variable as a binary item. Respondents who disclosed household income in the top quartile brackets were recoded as a '1', while the rest six income brackets were recoded as '0'. Similar to the relationship between employment status and incumbent support, I predict that higher income households will be more likely to disclose an incumbent-oriented vote intention.

The next indicator, partisanship, is coded as a binary variable with the party identification of the respondent taking on a '1' if the party is the incumbent and '0' if the party is non-incumbent. Due to infancy and volatility of party systems, the Armenian and Georgian electorate include a large percentage of non-partisans. Omitting them from the study would severely decrease the number of observations. Thus, non-partisans were also coded as '0'. [75] The 2016 GPAS asked respondents, *which party do you feel close to?* Unfortunately, GPAS did not ask the question in a standard format, which consists of two parts: a closed-ended question about whether a respondent feels close to any particular party and then an open-ended question about which party the respondent feels close to. GPAS only asked the latter. Thus, respondents were

[75] In the Chapter 6, I present a regression output where the party ID is coded categorically. This is to distinguish between partisans and non-partisans. Thus, non-incumbent partisans took on a '1'

skewed toward selecting a specific party. The 2017 ArmES used the two-pronged approach. This resulted in a larger amount non-partisans in the Armenian sample than in the Georgian sample (see Chapter 6). However, I am solely interested in identifying RPA and Georgian Dream partisans. Thus, the different question format between the two surveys does not significantly alter my results. It does however limit cross-national analyses because the question wording of the Armenian sample decreases the total number of partisans.

The last indicator, the economy, is measured as a change in voter prospective-egotropic perception. The 2016 GPAS asked voters, *what are your expectations regarding economic situation of your household for the next twelve months?* This question can be considered a prospective-egotropic measure of the economy. The response item contains a typical five-point scale of wellbeing.[76] The 2017 ArmES asked a similar question with the exact wording and five-point response scale. To test the difference in perception of a negative versus a positive change in economic wellbeing, I kept the five-point scale but recoded response item between -2 and 2. This allows the middle category, 'will stay the same', to be recoded as a '0'. According to hypothesis H_{8b} and H_{8b}, I expect a positive change in the prospective-egotropic perception of the economy to be associated with higher likelihood of incumbent vote intention.

Data and Parameter Estimation: Binary Response Model

Since the coding of the dependent variable is presented in a binary format, the estimation of incumbent vote intention likelihood is interpreted using a binary response model.[77] In the next four chapters, I include three trials within each model. The first trial can be considered the

[76] A five-point scale of wellbeing includes, will worsen a lot, will worsen somewhat, will stay the same, will improve somewhat, and will improve a lot.
[77] Commonly referred to as a logit model.

baseline trial as it simply regresses the covariates on vote intention. Although the baseline trial presents an approximate output, it does not account for observation interdependence. The fact that I am relying on voting behavior traits across Armenia and Georgia implies that I am treating each observation (here, being the voter) as independent from one another. In reality, voters in both Armenia and Georgia may share sociological similarities based on their settlement location. For example, the popularity of the PAP is higher in the Kotayk region due to the province being the hometown of its founder, Gagik Tsarukyan. The city of Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city, is largely hostile to RPA support. To account for the varying provinces, I include a second trial, which controls for regional fixed-effects. The third trial further controls for respondent interdependence by clustering the standard errors around the country region within each sample. This accounts for voter similarities within regions. The latter two trials not only provide a refined test of voter behavior, but also analyze the robustness of the relationships present in the baseline model.

Conclusion

In voter behavior studies, SPM is methodologically applied using a block recursive approach. Each block contains a separate group of predictors based on the funnel of causality. Applying this research design to the Armenian and Georgian sample results in a four-stage regression model, where the first set of predictors are introduced, followed by the second set, and so on. The next four empirical chapters outline this pattern and test the statistical significance of each set of predictors. In Chapter Four, I introduce and test the impact of the three sociodemographic covariates. Chapter Five then adds the three socioeconomic predictors to the model. Both chapters solely address the impact of sociological variables on incumbent vote intention. The regression analyses in the fifth chapter outline the impact of the six sociological

vote predictors. In other words, the regression output can be considered the complete sociological for the Armenian and Georgian sample.

In the last two empirical chapters, I introduce partisanship and issues to the sociological model. In Chapter Six, the addition of party identification considers a psychological covariate within the list of predictors. Finally, Chapter Seven adds a valence issues: perceptions of the economy. From the next four chapters, we are better able to not only understand whether the vote function of Armenian and Georgian voters is in accordance to SPM but also what distinct predictors drive incumbent vote intention within both groups.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS & THE VOTE

In the Caucasus, sociodemographic characteristics are an important aspect of the vote function. The asymmetric dominance of parties of power often creates support and opposition groups based on demography. The sociodemographic element of the electorate is most widespread among young voters. In Armenia and Georgia, youth voters have not only actively mobilized to protest the incumbent but have been a vital aspect of, both, the rose and the velvet revolution. Georgian youth voters demonstrated their displeasure with the Shevardnadze regime through the creation of the *Kmara* movement. In Armenia, youth voters were instrumental in Pashinyan's disobedience campaign against the authorities and the RPA.

Aside from age, geography has also been a vital source of political behavior with rural voters in both countries preferring the patronage-abundant parties of power. This is evidenced by the most recent presidential election in Armenia. In February 2013, incumbent Sargsyan faced American-born Armenian politician Raffi Hovannisian and Armenia's first post-Soviet foreign minister. Sargsyan ran a traditional post-Soviet campaign of voter mobilization via patronage and vote buying (OSCE 2013). This tactic proved to be a winning strategy with rural voters, whose income scarcity made them susceptible to election irregularities.[78] Sargsyan's 2013 victory was in large part due to the asymmetrical support received in rural areas and sparsely populated provinces (CEC 2019).[79]

The sociodemographic impact on vote choice was also present in Georgia's 2013 presidential election. That election witnessed the consolidation of the executive by Georgian Dream, which secured the presidency with Giorgi Margvelashvili's victory. Sociodemographic

[78] Common irregularities included vote buying and being isolated by members of the community for not supporting the incumbent party.
[79] https://www.elections.am/presidential/

differences were a clear driver of the Margvelashvili vote. Elder voters and those residing in rural areas supported Margvelashvili, whereas young voters preferred the UNM candidate (NDI, 2013; 2014).[80] For example, seventy-three percent of rural Georgian voters supported Margvelashvili, compared to fifty-one percent in the capital and sixty-three percent in other urban areas. Overall, sociodemographic factors were largely influential in how Georgian voters perceived Margvelashvili and Georgian Dream.

In this chapter, I introduce three sociodemographic characteristics (age, sex, and geography) to the vote choice model. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of demographic characteristics and their impact on political behavior. Next, I rely on a *troika* of methodological tests to analyze the sociodemographic vote function. I begin with a bivariate illustration of both electorates. Then, I test for bivariate correlations using the tau-b statistic. Finally, I assess the relationship between sociodemographics and incumbent vote intention using a binary response model. The results suggest that the sociodemographic indicators are a better predictor of voter behavior in Georgia than in Armenia. In both countries, I find youth voters less likely to support the incumbent party. Beyond this, I find that rural voters in Georgia continue to prefer Georgian Dream over its rival the UNM. The concluding section provides practical implications of the sociodemographic on the vote.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Vote

In the latter Soviet years, Armenia's and Georgia's sociodemographic make up served as a linchpin toward independence and economic reform. Both countries experienced the emergence of anti-Soviet political activism, particularly among youth groups. The youth later

[80] Only fifty percent of voters between 18 to 35 disclosed a positive sentiment Margvelashvili. The highest support came from individuals 56 and older, of which seventy four percent disclosed a positive sentiment.

served as both a vital support coalition for Georgia's Round Table Block (RTB) and the Armenian National Movement (ANM). Georgia's heterogeneous ethnic make-up and the politicization of regional identity complicated the strife for independence. The nationalist movement was largely a reaction to an earlier call for autonomy from Georgia's Abkhazia region (Jones 2015). Thus, simultaneous calls for independence created ethnic hostilities and led Georgian residents to increasingly identify with their ethnic group. In Armenia, the homogeneous ethnic makeup of the population combined with a pan-Armeno cause led to a smoother transition toward independence.

In the Caucasus, Gorbachev's reforms were positively received by the regions youth, who began to voice their concern about Soviet policies, particularly around ecology (Ishkanian 2008; Jones 2015). Concerns about the environment soon transformed into calls of nationalism. This led to the ascendance of Ter-Petrosyan and Gamsakhurdia, in Armenia and Georgia respectively. Both leaders maintained a wide network of supporters, including the country's youth and regional residents. These sociodemographic groups were among the most critical of the Soviet system. In the case of Georgia, its rural residents supported Gamsakhurdia's presidency as a gesture against Georgia's urbanized elite (Jones 2015).

Following independence, Armenia's and Georgia's governments continued to seek support of the youth. For example, upon becoming president, Shevardnadze initiated policies that were supported by the youth (e.g. market-oriented economic reforms) and maintained a predominately young staff (Jones 2015). In Armenia, However, as both countries ascended toward patronal politics, support among the youth decreased. In Georgia, this culminated with the rose revolution, while in Armenia the youth's support for Pashinyan was vital towards the latter's political success.

Another sociodemographic group that has been important in Armenian and Georgian politics is rural residents. During the Soviet Union, the lack of privatization and the inability to engage in entrepreneurial farming led rural residents to be critical of the Soviet Union (Jones 2015). This made the rural voters a natural ally of RTB and ANM. Following independence, rural voters have become an important coalition group of Armenia's and Georgia's parties of power. The economic stagnation of rural communities has created opportunities for patronal networks to penetrate villages, pledge economic assistance and sustain support. As evident from the example in the Chapter's introduction, the largest form of patronal loyalty exists in rural areas, among voters whose materiality is directly related to agents of the party of power.

Descriptive Analyses

Age

In the post-Soviet space, age is an important indicator of political behavior. Older individuals whose political socialization process was shaped by the Soviet system may hold varying vote functions than those whose political opinions took shape after the fall of the USSR. During the Soviet era, political behavior was limited. While people held dissenting views towards the CPSU, a politically-organized opposition force did not exist. Thus, voters accepted the erected political barriers around them. In the post-Soviet space, despite the high level of party volatility among opposition groups, multiparty competition has occurred in every election. Moreover, both governments have been quite tolerating of dissent. This generational divide may indicate diverging behavioral voting patterns.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 distribute the age of respondents into four groups. In both surveys, we notice that the oldest age group (seventy and above) is the less numerous. Of 1,062 Armenian respondents, just ninety-four respondents, or nine percent of the entire sample, disclosed being

above sixty-nine years of age. In the Georgian sample, this group constitutes approximately seventeen percent of the entire sample. Beyond this, we find some differences among the two surveys. In the Armenian sample, the categorical distribution between the other three age groups is somewhat symmetrical, with the largest number of respondents being in the youngest age group. In the Georgian sample, the categorical distribution is less symmetric, and it is older respondents, between fifty-one and sixty-nine, who constitute the largest number of respondents. This difference may be attributable to the differences in the survey method. ArmES reached respondents via a telephone, while GPAS was conducted face-to-face. Since younger individuals are more likely to possess mobile phones, then the near symmetric age distribution in the Armenian sample may be due to the way the survey was administered.

Our first preview into the relationship between age and vote intention is illustrated in Figure 4.3 and 4.4. Recall that in hypotheses H_{1A} and H_{1B}, I posited a negative relationship between age and incumbent vote intention. The bivariate distributions produce mixed results. The Armenian sample does not show substantial opposition to RPA by young voters. In fact, about thirty-six percent of the youngest age group supported RPA. Interestingly, the group with the smallest percent of RPA support are respondents aged between fifty-one and sixty-nine. The largest percentage support for the incumbent government comes from the middle-aged citizenry, with forty-six percent of respondents between thirty-five and fifty supporting the RPA.

Figure 4.1: Age Categorized (Armenia)

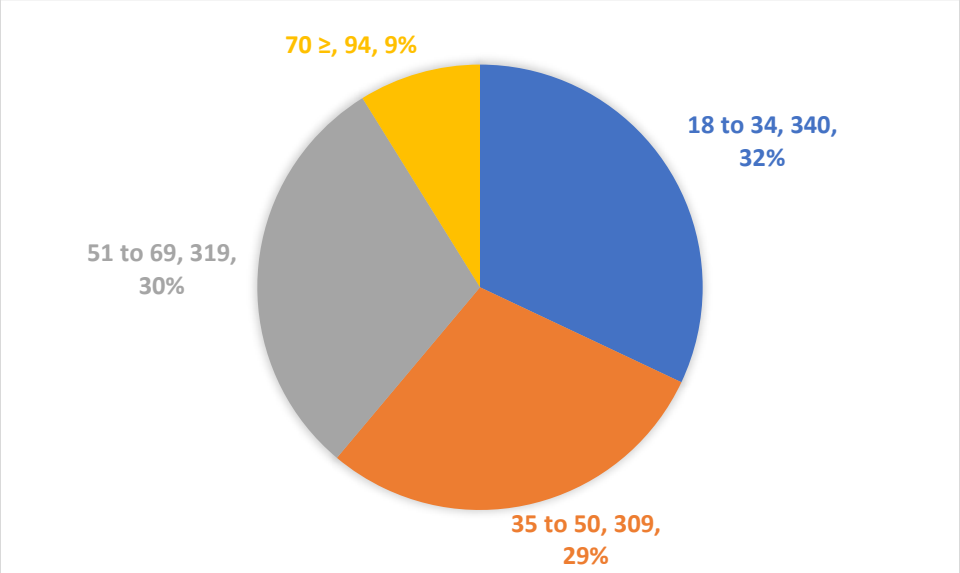


Figure 4.2: Age Categorized (Georgia)

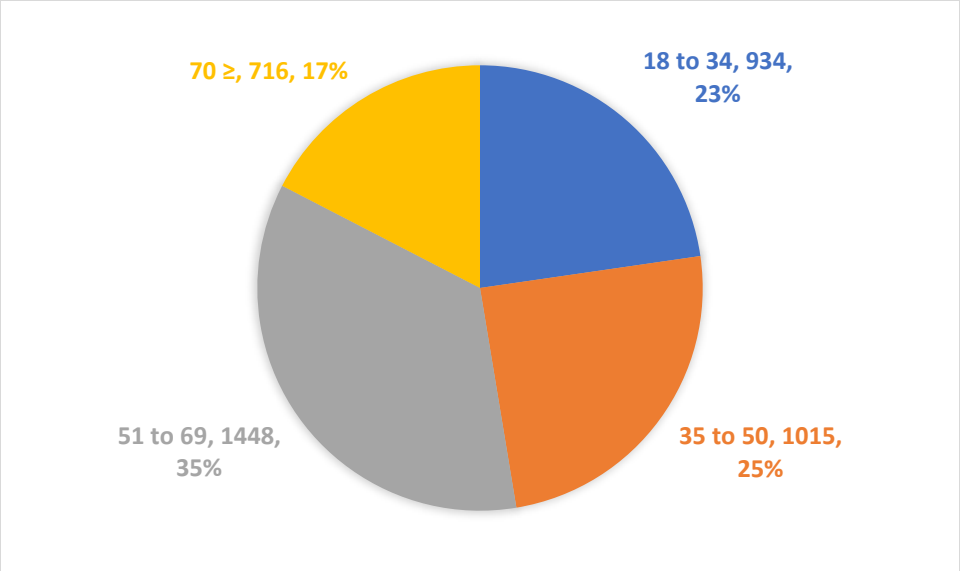


Figure 4.3: Vote by Age Group (Armenia)

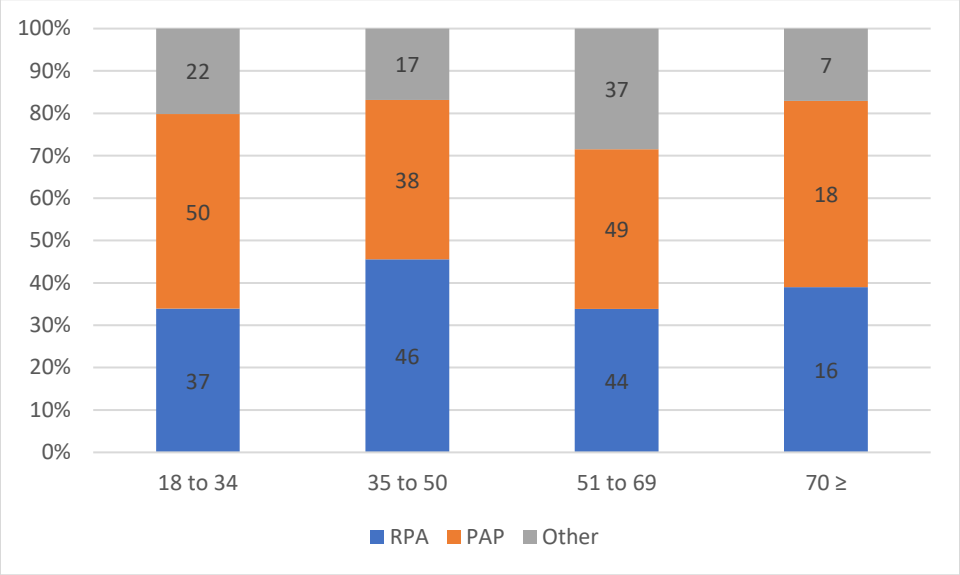
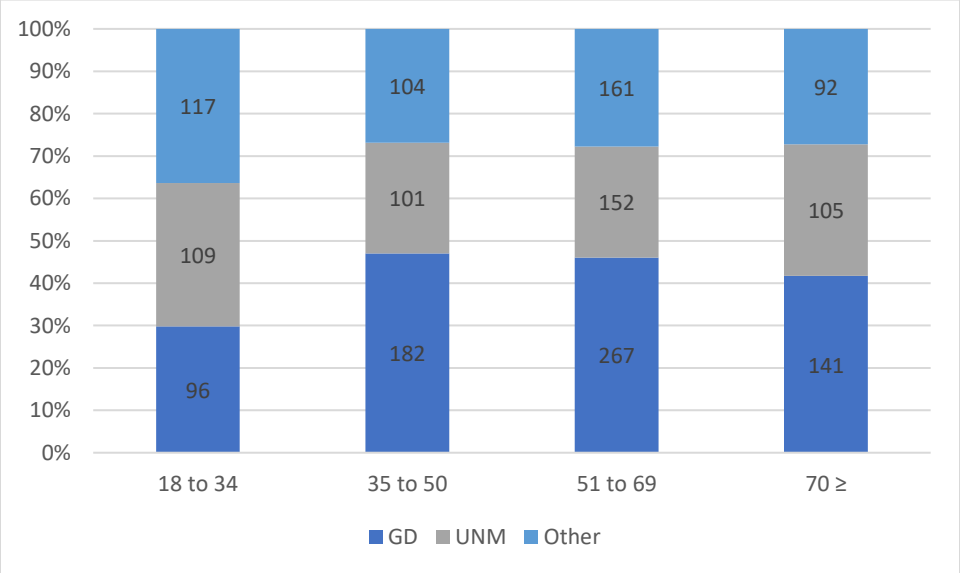


Figure 4.4: Vote by Age Group (Georgia)



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about thirty-six percent of the youngest age group supported RPA. Interestingly, the group with the smallest percent of RPA support are respondents aged between fifty-one and sixty-nine. The largest percentage support for the incumbent government comes from the middle-aged citizenry, with forty-six percent of respondents between thirty-five and fifty supporting the RPA.

The bivariate descriptive results for the Georgian sample are more favorable towards the stated hypothesis. Figure 4.4 illustrates that Georgian Dream registered the least amount of support from respondents between eighteen and thirty-four years of age. Approximately thirty percent of respondents in this age group supported the incumbent party. Young voters appear to be most sympathetic to UNM, the main opposition party. The current party of power, Georgian Dream, however, received its largest support from middle aged respondents, those between the ages of 35 to 50. Overall, the bivariate relationship between age and vote intention produces the hypothesized effect in one of the two samples. The cross-national illustration does produce a similarity between middle-aged Armenian and Georgian voters' preference for the party of power.

Sex

In Armenia and Georgia, political inclusion based on sex is becoming an increasingly important issue. Both countries operate in a patronal playfield that is also highly patriarchal. Although Armenia and Georgia have recently adopted measures to address the dominance of men in the political arena, the party leadership and access to political resources are still male-centric. The patriarchal nature of the political system leads to hypothesis H_{2A} and H_{2B}, which posit a negative relationship between respondent sex and incumbent vote intention.

Figure 4.5: Respondent Sex (Armenia)

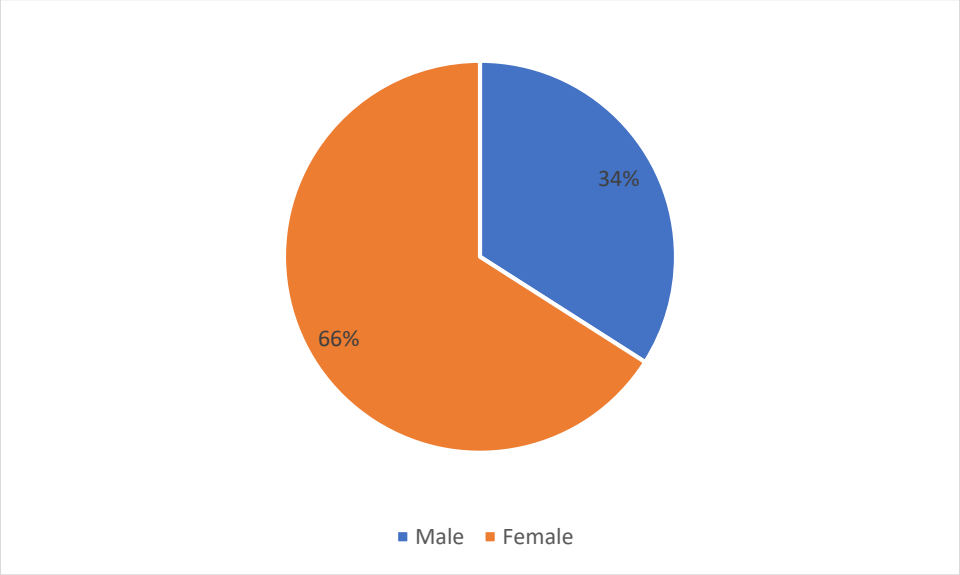


Figure 4.6: Respondent Sex (Georgia)

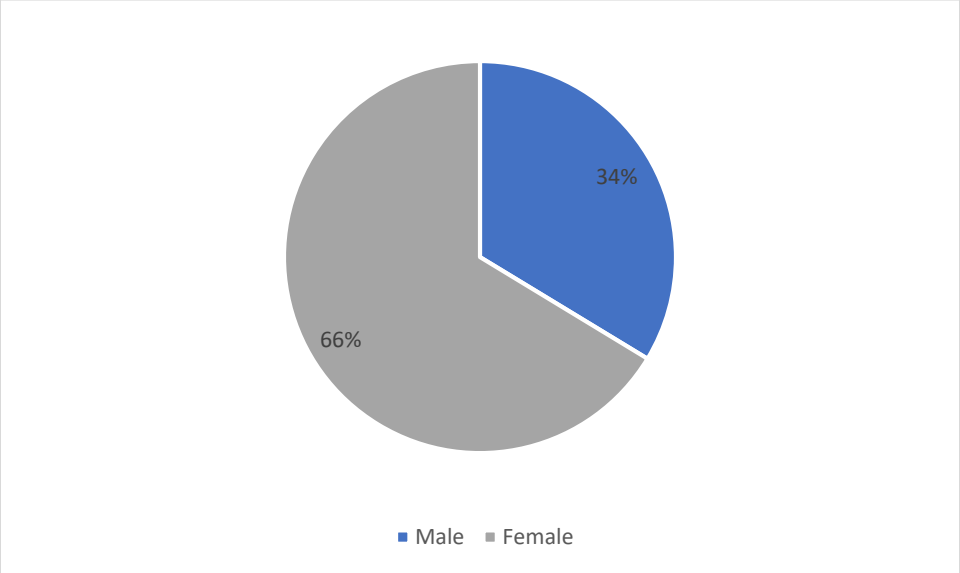


Figure 4.7: Sex by Vote Preference (Armenia)

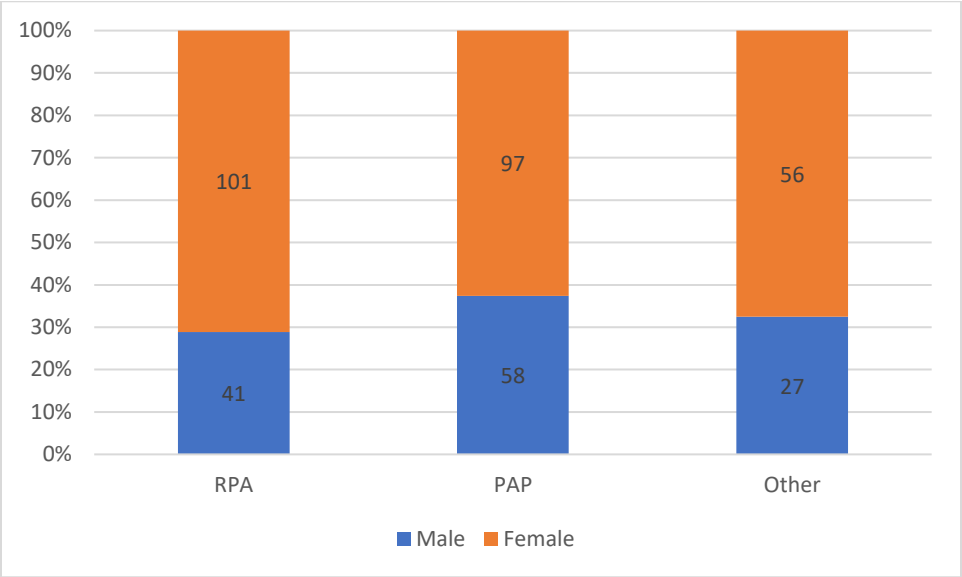
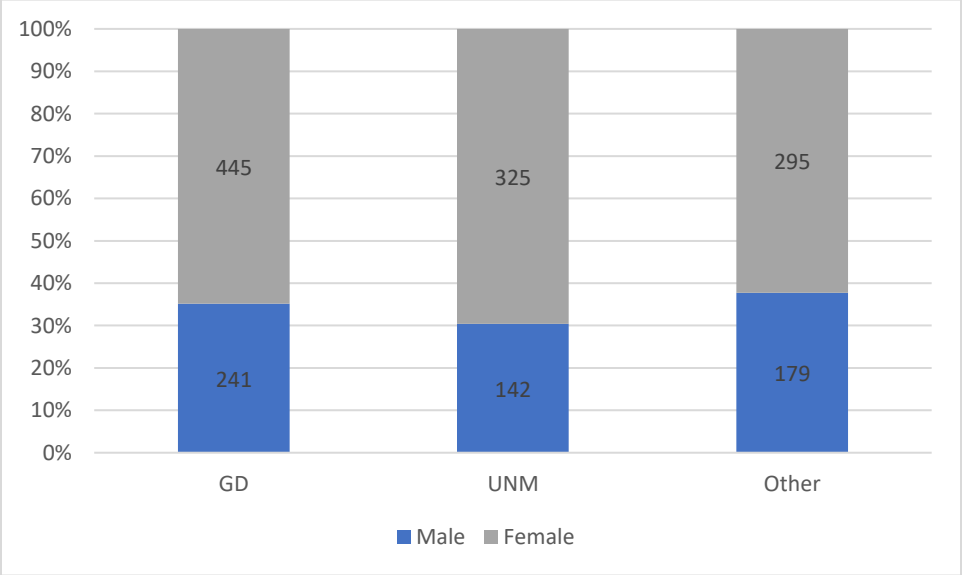


Figure 4.8: Sex by Vote Preference (Georgia)



Figures 4.5 and 4.6 provide the distribution of sex. Interestingly, both surveys interviewed the same percentage of males and females. The respondent sample consisted of thirty-four percent males and sixty-six percent females. This points to the fact that both the 2017 ArmES and the 2016 GPAS oversampled the number of female respondents since females in

Armenia consist of 51.4 percent of the population and females in Georgia consist of 52.2 percent of Georgia's population (CIA).

What is the relationship between female voters and incumbent vote intention? Figures 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate the relationship between sex and vote preference. The descriptive results suggest that Armenian and Georgian female voters tend to support the incumbent. In Armenia, it is males that are less supportive of the RPA. In fact, a higher percentage of females support the RPA than the PAP. This is quite surprising as the PAP is often branded as a female-inclusive political party and contains one of the largest percentages of female MPs. Among all Armenian female voters who disclosed a vote intention, forty percent supported the RPA, while thirty-eight percent supported PAP. Interestingly, the gender inclusivity of PAP does not seem to result in higher percentage of female voters, compared to RPA. In Georgia, female voters constitute a larger percentage of the opposition vote than the incumbent vote. However, when assessing the distribution of the female vote by party, we find that forty-two percent of females supported Georgian Dream, while thirty-one percent supported UNM. Thus, the descriptive illustration points toward a relationship that is counter to the hypothesized effect.

Geography

Geographical settlement is an important aspect of post-Soviet voter behavior. The infrastructural discrepancy between urban and rural areas is a continuation of the Soviet era. Throughout this period, the massive industrialization and urbanization came at the cost of rural stagnation in selected areas. In the last thirty years, this process has continued to occur throughout the region, with one main difference being the misappropriation of funds to ethnic minority communities. In Armenia, a country that is heavily homogenized, the discrepancy between ethnically Armenian residential communities and non-Armenian communities is

present, although not severe. Ethnic Armenians constitute ninety-eight percent of the population with Yezidi Kurds making up approximately one-percent of the remaining population (CIA - Armenia). Kurdish-settled areas lack the political connections that results in patronage for the local population. In Georgia, a country that is more heterogeneous, ethnic-based settlements are politically and economically salient. Minority communities include Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Ossetians among others (CIA – Georgia). These communities are also territorially segregated, with Armenians residing mainly in northwestern Georgia and Azerbaijanis residing in southeastern Georgia.

The varying ethno-geographical makeup between Armenia and Georgia is also evident in how both surveys operationalized geography. The 2017 ArmES divided respondents into three settlement categories: residence in Yerevan, residence in an urban setting (not including Yerevan), and residence in a rural setting. Since the mode of the survey was the telephone, rural respondents were underrepresented due to the scarcity of telecommunication in rural areas. The 2016 GPAS categorized respondents into four settlement types: residence in Tbilisi, urban, rural, and non-Georgian territories. In Georgia, settlement distribution was more representative although Tbilisi and other urban areas were still overrepresented, despite the mode of the survey being face to face.

Figures 4.9 and 4.10 provide the distribution of respondents by settlement type for both samples. In Armenia, eighty-five percent of respondents disclosed residing in an urban setting, while the rest fifteen percent came from a rural setting.[81] Since respondent settlement is based on self-reporting there may be cases where respondents who are residing in rural areas but reported

[81] This number is more than half the actual rural percentage of the population. The 2018 figure points to thirty-seven percent of Armenia's population residing in a rural setting (CIA – Armenia).

an ‘urban’ settlement to describe their place of residence. In Armenia, the word rural is often used in a negative connotation, describing an economically backward place and/or a socially background people. Thus, the low percentage of rural residence may be due to the presence of a social desirability bias. In Georgia, sixty percent of respondents disclosed residing in an urban setting, although this number may be misleading since many respondents residing in non-Georgian settlements may be residing in an area considered urban. The Georgian sample provides a much more symmetrical distribution of the four settlements types, with fifteen percent of respondents residing in non-Georgian territories and twenty-five of the sample residing in rural areas.

Figure 4.9: Settlement Distribution (Armenia)

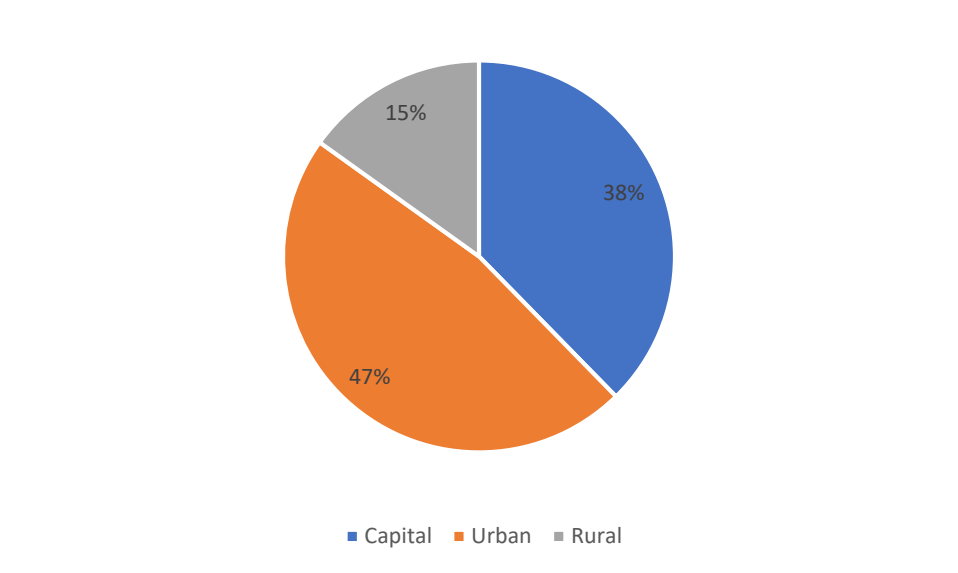
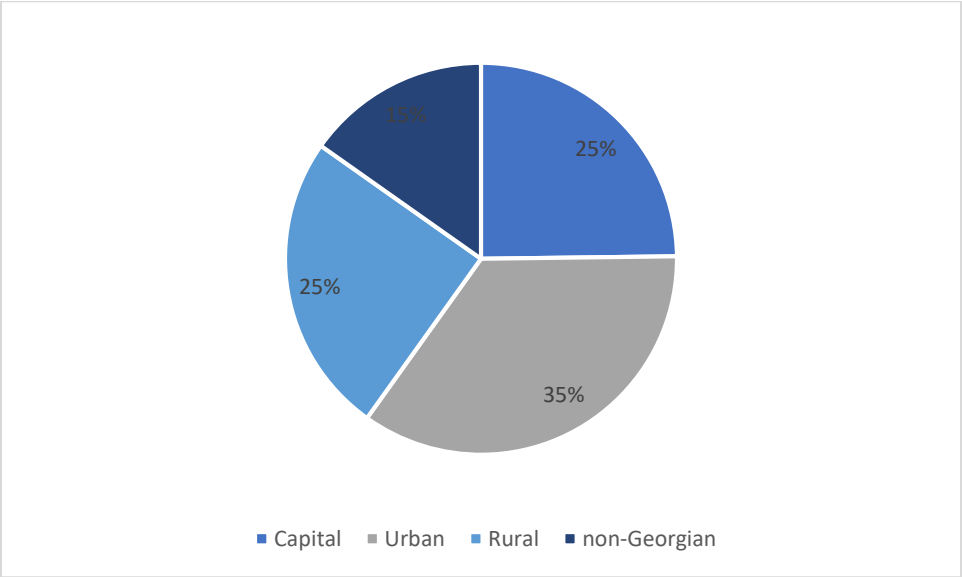


Figure 4.10: Settlement Distribution (Georgia)



Figures 4.11 and 4.12 plot vote intention by settlement type. In the Armenian sample, the bivariate distributions suggest an almost symmetrical incumbent vote intention distribution between Yerevan and other urban areas. Figure 4.17 also demonstrates a similar trend with PAP voters. However, when we assess the vote intention of rural residents we find that RPA support is relatively lower, while PAP support is relatively higher. The popularity of PAP in rural areas in not surprising given the dire socioeconomic status of rural residents and their attraction to PAP's populous rhetoric. What is unexpected is the relatively low level of support for RPA among the rural population. Recall that in previous elections RPA had relied on a large amount of rural support. Thus, the lower level of RPA support among the rural residents calls into question the legitimacy of their popularity.

Figure 4.11: Vote by Settlement Type (Armenia)

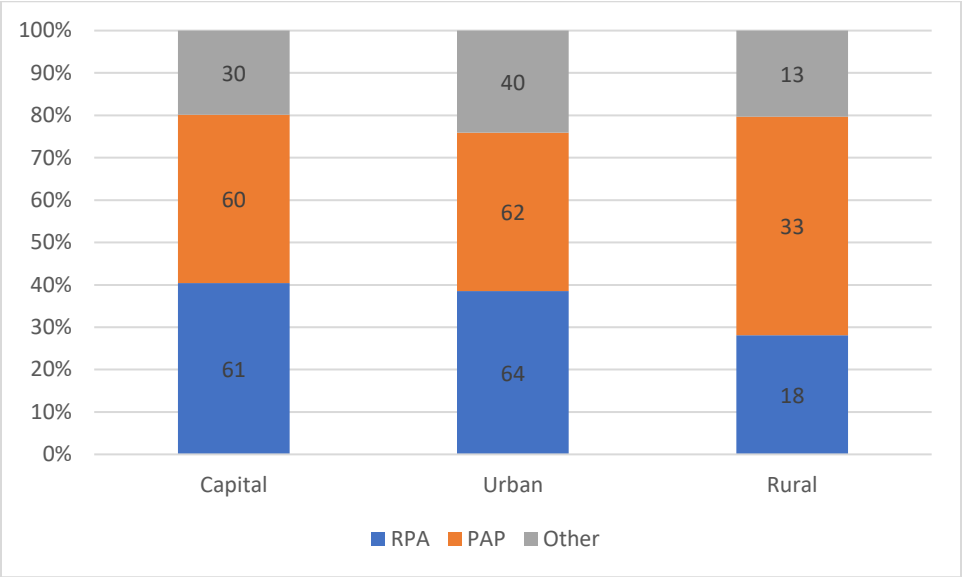
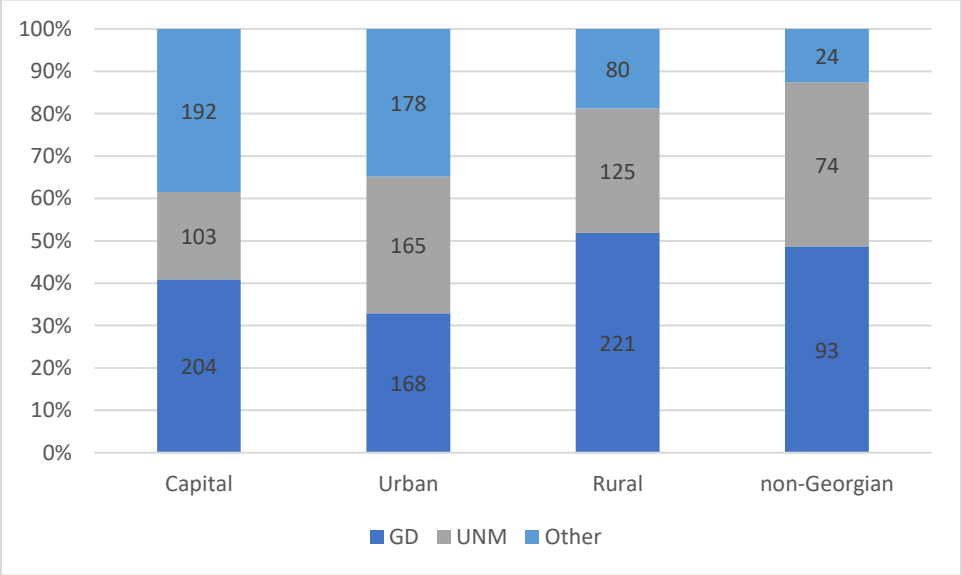


Figure 4.12: Vote by Settlement Type (Georgia)



Turning to the Georgian electorate, we notice that Georgian Dream is more popular in rural areas than in urban settings. This provides preliminary confirmation of the party's ability to build its support coalition in rural regions. Percentage wise, Tbilisi and other urban areas register the lowest level of Georgian Dream support, while rural and non-Georgian settlements consist of

the highest percentages of incumbent support. Support for Georgian Dream among respondents in non-Georgian settlements is quite surprising given that respondents from this area tend to be less socioeconomically affluent (See Chapter 5). This relationship suggests the possibility of the Georgian Dream patronage machine reaching beyond ethnic Georgians. In all, the bivariate plot confirms support of the incumbent among rural residents in Georgia, but not in Armenia.

Bivariate Correlations

In the previous section, I provided a bivariate illustration of the three sociodemographic covariates and vote intention. Here, I examine the relationship between each covariate and the dependent variable using the Kendall's Tau-b correlation measure. This correlation statistic ranges from 0 to 1 with larger values inferring a strong correlation and smaller values assuming low levels of correlation. Usage of a bivariate correlation test is a methodological improvement from the cross-tabulation illustrations in the previous section. It can also provide us with further evidence of the relationship between incumbent vote intention and sociodemographic characteristics.

The two tables below, Table 4.1 and 4.2, provide the Tau-b measure of correlation for the Armenian and Georgian sample. In the Armenian sample, age is the only covariate associated with incumbent vote intention. Initially, I treated age as a categorical variable. However, upon further analyses, I revised the measurement to include the differences between respondents born during the Soviet Union and after. This measure is perhaps a refinement of treating age as a categorical variable. Operationalizing age as a binary variable and differentiating respondents based on whether they were born during or after the Soviet system can better explain support for the incumbent. Beyond age, the association between the other two sociodemographic covariates is not only counter to the theory but the correlation is not significant. For example, the bivariate

association between being a female respondent and RPA vote share is weak, positive, and statistically insignificant. The bivariate association between residing in a rural setting is weak, negative, and statistically insignificant. All three attributes are counter to our expectations. Overall, the Armenian model performs quiet poorly. That said, recoding age as a binary variable suggests a relationship between the post-Soviet citizenry and opposition to the RPA.

Table 4.1: Sociodemographic Indicators and Incumbent Vote Intention (Armenia)	
Age (18/34 = 1; 35/50=2; 51/69=3; 70 ≥4)	0.0427
Age (post-Soviet born = 1, Soviet born = 0)	-0.0912***
Sex (Female = 1, Male = 0)	0.0400
Residence (Rural = 1, others = 0)	-0.0275

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

Table 4.2: Sociodemographic Indicators and Incumbent Vote Intention (Georgia)	
Age (18/34 = 1; 35/50=2; 51/69=3; 70 ≥4)	0.0731***
Age (post-Soviet born = 1, Soviet born = 0)	-0.0801***
Sex (Female = 1, Male = 0)	-0.0103
Residence (Rural = 1, others = 0)	0.0757***

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

In Table 4.2 we find that the sociodemographic covariates are a better fit in the Georgian sample. Interestingly, our two measures of age are statistically significant and in the expected direction. First, when we measure age as a categorical variable we find a positive and significant relationship between older individuals and Georgian Dream vote intention, albeit the bivariate association is quite weak. Second, when we recode age and divide the Georgian sample into individuals born during or after the Soviet Union, we find a negative and significant relationship between being born in independent Georgia and opposition to Georgian dream. Here again, the relationship is quite weak. The next two variables provide mixed support for our hypotheses. While the bivariate correlation between females and support for Georgia Dream is in the expected direction, the relationship is not statistically significant. Rural residential setting,

however, is statistically significant and in the expected direction. Overall, the Georgian sample performs better than the Armenian sample though that may be due to the large sample size of the latter.

Inferential Results: Armenia

Table 4.3 presents the sociodemographic results for Armenian voters. Despite using listwise deletion, the model retained 1,059 of the 1,062 samples. In the first trial, the age variable is treated categorically, with the reference category being 18 to 34 years of age. Here, we witness that none of the three age categories are statistically significant. In fact, the null results in the first trial infer that sociodemographic covariates are not a significant predictor of RPA vote share. However, to simply dismiss the impact of age is empirically premature. Recall, that Armenia's velvet revolution was ushered in by the country's youth movement. Thus, in the second trial I change the operationalization of the age indicator from a category variable to a binary one. The variable, *PS Age*, denotes respondents who were born in 1990 and after. This would make respondents twenty-seven years and younger as the category of interest. The coefficient estimate of age in the second trial provide preliminary support for the above-mentioned assumption. The relationship between post-soviet age and RPA vote intention appears to be inversely related. That is, respondents born in 1990 and after are less likely to intend to vote for the RPA by approximately nine percentage points.

In the next two trials I control for the impact of the respondent's region. In the third trial, I include a regions fixed effect. The addition does not alter the impact of age on RPA vote intention. In fact, this improves the overall performance of the model via the higher LR Chi-squared term. In Armenia, the strength of party machines varies from region to region. For example, Kotayk is the regional bedrock of PAP since its founder, Gagik Tsarukyan, hails from

that province. Thus, we can presume that support for RPA will be lower in Kotayk. The fourth trial adds clustered standard errors around the regions. The reason for this is RPA's support differs within each region. Thus, we can assume that voters in the Shiraq region are likely maintain similar voting attitudes than in Gegharkunik and Syunik. This is because voters in Shiraq are largely critical of the RPA, while voters in Gegharkunik and Syunik are some of the RPA's most loyal supporters. The inclusion of region fixed effects does little to improve the overall fit of the model. It does, however, decrease the significance threshold of the age variable to below ninety percent. Overall, the sociodemographic model performs quite poorly with only age significantly impacting the incumbent vote intention.

Table 4.3: Sociodemographic Vote Determinants (Armenia)

	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
Age				
35 – 50	.04 (.03)			
51 – 69	.03 (.03)			
70 ≥	.05 (.04)			
PS Age		-.09*** (.03)	-.08*** (.03)	-.09 (.06)
Female	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Rural	-.03 (.03)	.03 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)
Region FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Cluster SE	No	No	No	Yes
Obs.	1,059	1,059	1,059	1,059
LR Chi^2	5.33***	11.59***	30.37***	30.37***
Wald Chi^2				
Pseudo R^2	.01	.01	.04	.04

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Figure 4.13 illustrates the results above. Each horizonal line represents a sociodemographic covariate and the ranges of each line are the confidence intervals. We notice that the re-operationalization of the age term leads to its statistical significance, albeit with wide

confidence intervals. The other two sociodemographic covariates are not only statistically insignificant at the minimum threshold (***$\rho \leq .10$), but the direction relationship is counter to the hypotheses. The coefficient estimate for the female covariate is to the right of zero suggesting a positive relationship between females and RPA vote intention, while the coefficient estimate for rural residence is to the left of zero suggesting a negative relationship between rural voters and RPA vote intention.

Figure 4.13: Regression Coefficient Plot (Armenia)

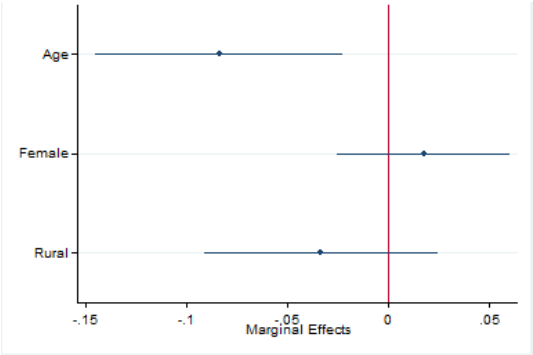


Figure 4.14: Adjusted Predictions of Age

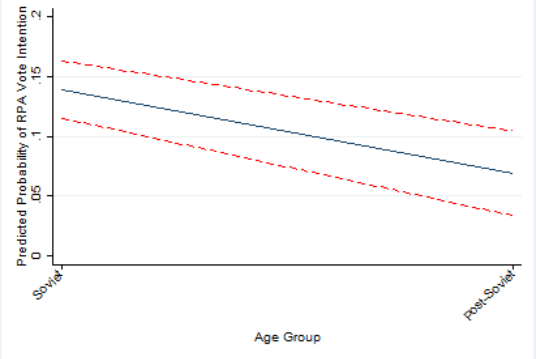


Figure 4.14 provides further analysis of the impact of post-Soviet age on incumbent vote intention. First, we see that the 95 percent confidence interval is much narrower for Soviet born individuals than post-Soviet born. This is due to the sample size difference between the two groups. Of the 1,062 sampled, an overwhelming majority were born during the Soviet period

(862), while approximately nineteen percent (200) are considered post-Soviet births. Second, we witness a downward sloping line between Soviet born and post-Soviet born. This suggests that as we move from one respondent group to the next, the probability of an incumbent vote decreases by approximately eight or nine percentage points. Finally, the marginal prediction plot does not offer much substantive significance. While we witness a drop in the incumbent vote share among the post-Soviet born citizenry, its impact is substantively insignificant.

Inferential Results: Georgia

Table 4.4: Sociodemographic Vote Determinants (Georgia)				
	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
Age				
35 – 50	.08*** (.02)			
51 – 69	.08*** (.01)			
70 ≥	.09*** (.02)			
PS Age		-.12*** (.02)	-.12*** (.02)	-.12*** (.03)
Female	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Rural	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	-.03 (.03)	.06 (.05)
Region FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Cluster SE	No	No	No	Yes
Obs.	4,113	4,113	4,113	4,113
LR Chi^2	59.77***	52.12***	319.30***	71.33***
Wald Chi^2				
Pseudo R^2	.02	.01	.09	.01

In Table 4.4, we observe the sociodemographic vote determinants for Georgian voters. Overall, the sociodemographic predictability of incumbent vote intention is stronger in Georgia than in Armenia. Looking at the first trial, we find that age is a significant predictor for Georgian Dream vote intention. Compared to the youngest age category (18 to 34), all older age groups are more likely to vote for Georgian Dream. In fact, as we progress through the groups the

magnitude of the coefficient estimates increases. The results here suggest that compared to young Georgian voters, older Georgian voters are between eight and nine percentage points more likely to vote for the incumbent. Beyond age, we also notice that residing in a rural settlement incentivizes one to vote for Georgian Dream by approximately six percentage points over respondents living in urban areas. The relationship between female voters and Georgian Dream vote intention, despite being in the right direction, is statistically insignificant. The baseline trial performs quite well in empirically supporting the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. Georgian Dream is quite successful with older voters and rural voters.

In the second trial, I replace the categorical age variable with a binary variable denoting whether the respondent was born after the Soviet Union. The results parallel Armenian sample with post-Soviet Georgian voters being less likely to support the Georgian Dream government by approximately twelve percentage points. The third trial adds region fixed effects, and we notice that the rural covariate is no longer statistically significant. The fourth trial clusters the standard errors around the region and minority settlements. This is done because Georgian Dream support varies across regions, with some territorial communities being more supportive of the incumbent government than others. From the last two trials, when accounting for spatial dispersion of voters, the impact of region is nullified. However, the post-Soviet age covariate remains unchanged.

An illustrative account of the result from Table 4.4 are provided in Figure 4.15. Of the three sociodemographic covariates, two are statistically significant and in the right direction. Compared to the illustration of the Armenian sample (Figure 4.13), the confidence intervals in the figure below are relatively smaller. This may be due to the substantially larger sample size of

the Georgian model. From Figure 4.15, we can conclude that the vote intention for Georgian Dream is partially based on a voter's age and to a lesser extent their rural settlement.

Figure 4.15: Regression Coefficient Plot (Georgia)

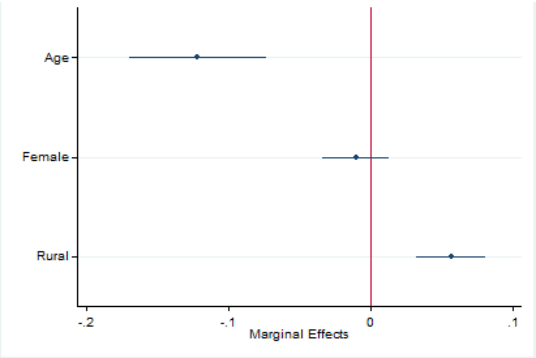


Figure 4.16: Adjusted Predictions of Age

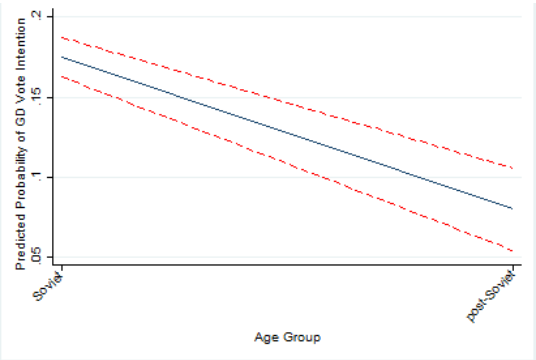


Figure 4.16 further illustrates the impact of age on Georgian Dream vote intention. Paralleling the findings of the Armenian sample, we notice a negative-sloped line suggesting that post-Soviet born Georgians are less likely to favor Georgian Dream than Soviet born Georgians. Despite this similarity, the line in Figure 4.16 is more inelastic compared to Figure 4.14. This suggests that the impact of Soviet and post-Soviet age is greater for the Georgian sample than it is for the Armenian sample.

Conclusion

Do Armenian and Georgian voters rely on their sociodemographic group when casting a vote for the incumbent? In this chapter I outlined three sociodemographic determinants of the vote for RPA and Georgian Dream. In Armenia and Georgia, sociodemographic indicators impact dissatisfaction with the party of power. Specifically, youthfulness is a significant predictor of opposition to both incumbent parties. Post-Soviet voters are more likely to oppose the incumbent government than their Soviet-born counterparts. This may be because young Armenian and Georgian voters have experienced the ills of patronal politics. A system that neglects meritocracy and advocates for the *economies of affection* is one where upward mobility is severely limited to the patronal network one belongs to.

Beyond age, we find that rural settlement is a predictor for Georgian Dream support among Georgians. This finding is also in line with the stated hypothesis and parallels the party manifesto and election strategy of Georgian Dream. The success of Ivanishvili's party is due to its emphasis on socioeconomic disparity and the promise to address unemployment. Both of these issues are highly salient among rural Georgians. This is evidenced by the large number of rural Georgians (fifty-seven percent) who disclosed employment as the most important national issue compared to urban Georgians (forty-eight percent).

The above findings provide *three* implications for incumbent electoral strategies. First, incumbent parties must address the negative perceptions of their support among young voters. In Georgia, disenfranchised young voters have a history of shortening the incumbent lifecycle of parties of power. The unpopularity of Georgian Dream among young voters should be interpreted as a warning to the sustainability of its incumbent status. The youth's impact on cutting short Shevardnadze's political career and helping launch Saakashvili's is testament to the political power of this sociodemographic group. In Armenia, the results above paralleled the

events of spring 2018. Young Armenian voters are the most important ingredient toward the success of the velvet revolution.

Second, Georgian Dream's emphasis on rural voters is shown to have electoral rewards. The government can expand on this by continuing to concentrate on the socioeconomic needs of the rural electorate. One fact that was not considered in this chapter is to what extent rural support for Georgian Dream is driven by the party's socioeconomic platform or by its patronage. Given the party's past reliance on patronalism, one may suspect that support among the rural electorate is due to patronal politics.

Finally, both incumbent parties have failed to attract the female electorate. The statistically insignificant relationship between female voters and incumbent vote intention suggests that female voters are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the incumbent government. The fact that female voters are the majority of the voting group in both countries should incentivize governments to create female inclusive administrations and target policies toward female voters. Although the latter requires some form of democratization, creating reforming the existent patronal environment to include female patrons or sub-patrons may help to increase support for this important voting bloc.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIOECONOMICS & THE VOTE

The collapse of the Soviet Union increased the salience of socioeconomic issues in the Caucasus. The breakdown of the Soviet welfare state combined with the contraction of the post-Soviet Armenian and Georgian state led to a sharp decrease in the standard of living across the region. Instead of the omnipotent CPSU, the governing parties in the newly independent republics constructed patronal systems that catered to their support coalitions. This resulted in the politicization of education and economic mobility tied to chains of acquittances. Consequently, socioeconomic issues became a leading cause for political coalescence among voters critical of the regime in both countries.

The mismanagement of socioeconomic concerns was key to the collapse of the region's parties of power. For example, the politicization of education brought an end to the Shevardnadze administration. In Armenia, the delegitimization of RPA's popularity took shape following the exposure of its coercive practices. In March 2017, Daniel Ioannisyan, a political activist and head of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO, published scathing audio recordings that he had made with dozens of officials within Armenia's public education system.[82] The audio featured Ioannisyan, who pretended to be a member of the RPA, discussing the existence of voter lists and other tactics used by officials to boost RPA support.[83] Ioannisyan exposed more than one hundred schools disclosing and discussing tactics that they were undertaking to increase RPA support. School principals open admitted to coercing parents to support the RPA, maintaining voter lists of parents who pledged their support, and threatening school teachers with

[82] The actual number of schools under consideration was 136. https://www.evnreport.com/politics/abusing-the-levers-of-power; https://www.paradiplomacy.tv/en/news/view/141.html

[83] In post-Soviet Armenia, anecdotal evidence existed about parties of power using state education facilities to coercively recruit and mobilize voters. For example, a common narrative stated that RPA officials had actively mandated school heads to bus teachers and students to RPA rallies and RPA-sponsored events.

penalties for refusing to support the party of power.[84] The exposure would later serve as a mobilizing call among Armenia's higher educated student against the RPA.

In this chapter, I expand the Armenian and Georgian electorate's vote function to include three socioeconomic indicators: education, employment, and household income. I begin with a brief discussion of the three indicators in the vote function of the Armenian and Georgian electorate. Next, I provide a bivariate, descriptive analysis of the relationship between the socioeconomic variables and the dependent variable. Following the bivariate results, I analyze the tau-b correlation between incumbent vote intention and the three socioeconomic indicators. Finally, I regress the impact of education, employment, and household income on incumbent vote intention. The results dismiss the educative hypothesis (H_4), confirm the employment hypothesis (H_5), and partially confirm the household income hypothesis (H_6). The education covariate is found to be statistically insignificant in the Armenian sample, but counter to the expected direction in the Georgian sample. Employment is found to be a statistically significant predictor of incumbent vote intention in both samples, thus confirming H_5. And household income is found to be statistically significant only in the Georgian sample, thus partially confirming H_6. The addition of the three socioeconomic vote determinants results in age and employment as the two sociological predictors of incumbent vote intention among the Armenian and Georgian electorate. In the last section, I discuss the unexpected relationship between education and Georgian Dream support and offer some explanations of why college educated voters seem to support Georgia's party of power.

[84] Interestingly, in the midst of the velvet revolution several school teachers from Armenia's 'Monte Melkonyan' school came forward and accused the school principal and childhood friend of former Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, Ruzanna Azizyan, of keeping their regular teacher bonuses and donating the amounts to the RPA.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Vote

The emergence of competitive authoritarianism and patronal politics in Armenia and Georgia deepened the socioeconomic disparity among the population. The need to constantly secure their networks resulted in successive patrons-in-chiefs orienting public spending towards the consolidation and readiness of the regime. As Gallina (2010) suggests, this led to the neglect of socioeconomic indicators, particularly limited spending on education. Instead of continuing the Soviet investment in education, both the ANM and CUG politicized administrative duties of such institutions and relied on their members for monetary support.[85] Instead of providing economic investments in rural communities, both regimes invested in their patronal figures. As such, addressing socioeconomic disparity became of second-order importance for both governments.[86]

An overview of Armenian and Georgian electoral politics in the early 1990s points toward a voting behavior paradox: despite the decrease in socioeconomic conditions, incumbents such as Ter-Petrosyan and Shevardnadze were widely popular among voters. This mismatch can be explained by the political tactics of both regimes, who blamed the economic downturn on militarized disputes. In the case of Armenia, the "external" causes of Armenia's economic downturn were beneficial for the ANM and President Ter-Petrosyan. The new Armenian elite were able to avoid electoral accountability for the economic downturn and use the economic

[85] The politicization of educational facilities is common in the post-Soviet space. Its inception is primarily due to the legal structure, which in many post-Soviet countries called for senior elected officials to hire the heads of education facilities. For example, in Georgia during the Shevardnadze era, President Eduard Shevardnadze personally hired and terminated high-ranking university officials (Jones 2015: 211-2). This not only created a patron-client relationship between political officials and education administrators, it also extended Shevardnadze's patronal network into education institutions.

[86] Georgia's Gamsakhurdia openly downgraded socioeconomic concerns and emphasized identity issues. During his short tenure, the prevalence of ethnic Georgians was prioritized over an economy in turmoil (Jones 2015).

crisis to streamline market-liberalizing policies.[87] The Armenian electorate, who had backed Ter-Petrosyan's nationalist campaign, initially avoided blaming the first post-Soviet government for its socioeconomic decline.

The politicization of educational institutions and the fostering of patronal politics by the ANM and CUG gradually led voters to shift their support away from the parties of power. In Armenia, the failure of neoliberal reforms to stabilize wages led voters to support his political rival Vazgen Manukyan. Ter-Petrosyan's share a support among less affluent voters was a fraction of what it was in 1991. In Georgia, despite economic liberalizing policies that brought inflation to single digits and real GDP growth rates to double digits, market-oriented reforms failed to translate to socioeconomic development. The country's implementation of privatization policies did not cease the growing socioeconomic disparity. The lack of investment resulted in shrinking household income. For example, in 2002 income was forty-percent of what it was in 1991 (Jones 2015: 192). In the scope of education, Shevardnadze's politicization of college administrations led Georgian college students, who a decade earlier had supported the president's economic reforms, to oppose Shevardnadze's tenure. By the 2003 parliamentary elections, Shevardnadze's had lost his mandate to govern, particularly among the educated and the less affluent.

The failure of ANM and CUD to alter the socioeconomic mobility of Armenians and Georgians led both parties of power to be replaced by the RPA and UNM. In Armenia, RPA presided over an unprecedented form of macroeconomic growth between 1999 and 2008 (World Bank 2019). Despite this, the economic expansion did not trickle down to median Armenian

[87] The Pan-Armenian National Movement was victorious in a pair of elections following independence.

voter. In Georgia, the outcome of the rose revolution led Saakashvili to implement a dual-track policy of tackling income inequality and economic liberalization. The latter involved promoting individual rights and entrepreneurship. However, by the end of his first presidential term Saakashvili's economic reforms did not produce substantial socioeconomic change. The emphasis on market-oriented economics neglected the issues of income inequality and unemployment (MacFarlane 2011).[88]

The UNM's failure to address socioeconomic concerns of rural voters and the growing hostility among the educated towards UNM's strongarm politics led UNM's coalition group of the educated and rural voters to collapse. The party of power was defeated by Georgian Dream in the 2012 parliamentary elections. In Armenia, RPA's politicization of education brought about an adverse reaction in the form of increased student protests. As mentioned earlier, this decision had an unintended consequence: the political activation of students. The first presence of a sizable youth group occurred during the 2013 public transportation protests. Student organization were instrumental in calling for city-wide boycotts of public buses.[89] This was followed by the 2015 Electric Yerevan protests, where student organizations played a vital role in mobilizing young individuals and successfully opposing a substantial electricity rate increase. The impact of student organization culminated with the 2018 velvet revolution, which saw nationwide classroom walkouts and an active campaign to paralyze transportation throughout the country. In

[88] Jones (2015) describes the Saakashvili's first term in the following: "…The reality of Georgia's economy in 2007, despite improvements, was low incomes, inadequate pensions, high unemployment (especially among urban educated youth), weak social and health support, and unaffordable education" (Jones 2012: 8).

[89] In July 2013, the Yerevan government ruled to increase public transportation from 100 Dram (about twenty cents) to 150 Dram. The public reaction to this was swift. Several student organizations began non-stop protests, called on for a boycott of public transportation, and even used their personal vehicles to transport Yerevan residents from one transportation stop to another.

all, socioeconomic groups both shaped the longevity and the stability of parties of power in the Caucasus.

Descriptive Analyses

In this section, I analyze the bivariate relationships between the three socioeconomic vote predictors (education, employment status, household income) and vote choice. Using data from the 2016 GPAS and the 2017 ArmES, I find bivariate patterns between educational attainment and support for Georgian Dream. I also uncover the highest percentage of incumbent support among both Armenian and Georgian employed respondents. However, a linear bivariate relationship between household income and incumbent vote intention does not appear to be occurring among both electorates.

Education

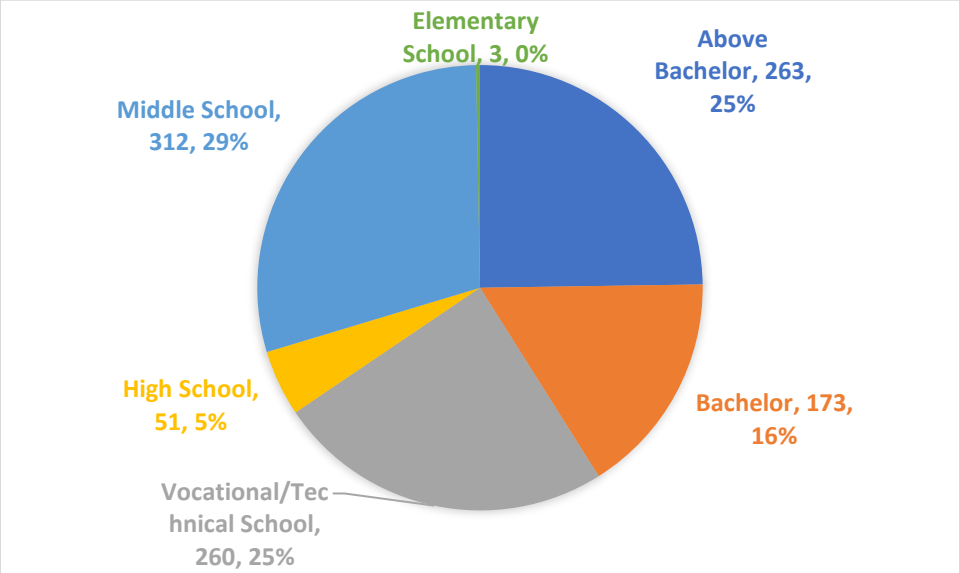
In Chapter Two, I posited that educational attainment is negatively associated with support for both the RPA and Georgian Dream. Specifically, college educated respondents will be less likely to vote for the incumbent in both governments. In Armenia, this proposition is derived from the increasing role student organizations have played in the overall anti-RPA movements.[90] In Georgia, the proposition is related to the increasingly negative perception of Georgian Dream by student movements.

The 2017 ArmES asked respondents to disclose their level of education. Figure 5.1 provides the distribution of responses. The output illustrates a trimodal distribution of educational attainment. Of the 1,062 individuals sampled, 312 disclosed completing middle school, 260 disclosed completing a vocation or technical school, and 263 disclosed completing a

[90] https://www.rferl.org/a/this-round-of-armenian-protests-smells-like-teen-spirit/29182665.html

postgraduate education. The combination of the latter two groups and the inclusion of respondents with bachelor degrees suggests that sixty-six percent of respondents possess some form of a post-secondary education. This descriptive result is not surprising as the many individuals obtained their education under the Soviet banner, which explicitly advocated for an educated *homo Sovieticus*. Figure 5.1 also suggests that individuals who complete middle school and move on to complete high school are more likely to obtain a higher education degree. This is because only fifty-one respondents (approximately five-percent of the entire sample) reported only completing high-school, compared to three-hundred twelve (approximately twenty-nine percent) who completed middle school. In other words, Armenian voters who complete high school tend to proceed to higher education.

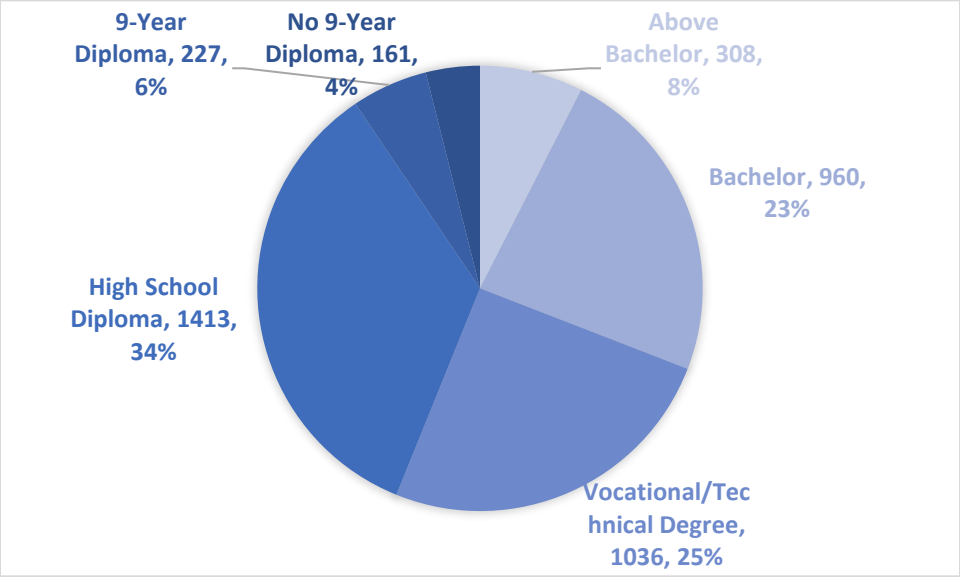
Figure 5.1: Level of Education (Armenia)



The descriptive patterns evident in the Armenian sample are partially found with Georgian respondents. In Georgia, the middle school system runs from grades seventh through ninth. Thus, a respondent with a nine-year education is equivalent to an Armenian respondent with a middle school education. Figure 5.2 illustrates the distribution of education for Georgian

respondents. Here we find both similarities and differences between the Armenian and Georgian sample. For example, the education attainment cutoff for Georgians is not at the middle school level but at the high school level. In fact, thirty-four percent of respondents reported completing their education at the high school level. That said, the results from both samples demonstrate that Armenian and Georgian voters are largely college educated individuals. In Georgia, some fifty-six percent reported having at least a technical degree.

Figure 5.2: Level of Education (Georgia)



Hypotheses H_{4a} and H_{4b} posit that education will be negatively associated with incumbent vote intention. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 provide a bivariate illustration between the two variables and reveal findings that are contrary to the hypotheses. In figure 5.3, we notice that the percentage of RPA vote intention is lower among respondents with secondary education than among respondents with at least a vocational or technical degree. The difference between respondents with either a middle school or high school education and respondents with a technical or a four-year degree is approximately twenty percentage points. This runs counter to the assumption that higher educated individuals will be less likely to favor the RPA.

Figure 5.3: Education and Vote Preference (Armenia)

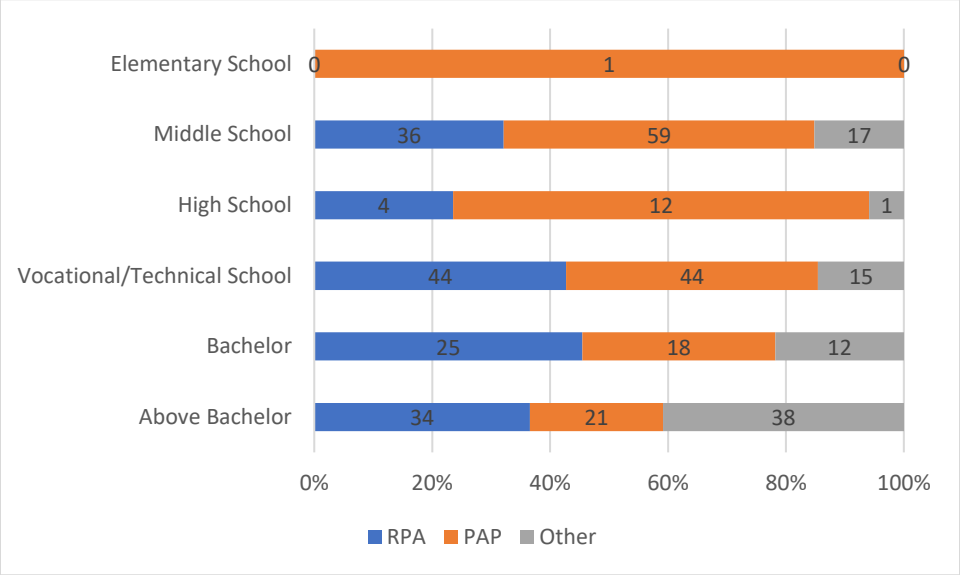
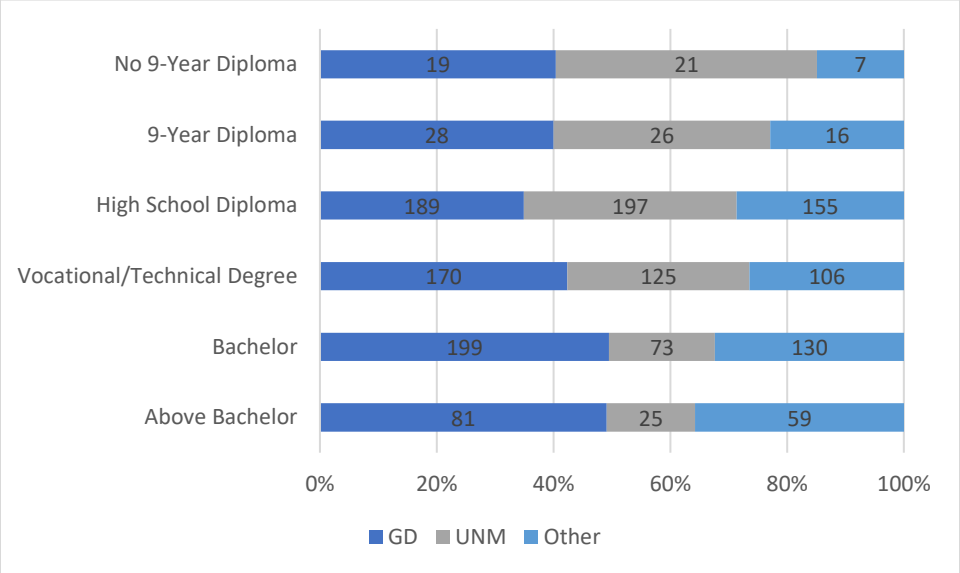


Figure 5.4: Education and Vote Preference (Georgia)



In the Georgian sample, we notice a similar pattern. Individuals with higher education are more supportive of Georgian Dream. Almost half of all respondents with at least a four-year college degree intended to support the incumbent government. For individuals with a high school

degree, the level of support decreases to thirty-five percent. Thus, the descriptive results point toward a public that may favor the incumbent government as their levels of education increases.

Employment

In the second chapter, I posited that both Armenian and Georgian voters who are employed will be more likely to favor the incumbent government. The higher level of incumbent support from employed individuals may stem from higher socioeconomic wellbeing. However, it may also stem from a patronal voting. In both Armenia and Georgian, nepotism and relational employment is abundant, especially within the public sector. Thus, the tendency to support the party of power may not only stem from higher socioeconomic wellbeing but also the tendency to tie the employment with the party of power.[91]

Figures 5.5 and 5.6 present the distribution of employment status among Armenian and Georgian respondents. Before analyzing the illustrations, it is worth mentioning that the 2017 unemployment rate in Armenia and Georgia was approximately eighteen and twelve percent, respectfully (World Bank 2019). When comparing the objective aggregate measures to the subjective, individual-level responses, we find that in both cases, the percent of individuals unemployed was higher in the latter. In Armenia, we notice that twenty-five percent disclosed being unemployed. In Georgia, twenty-four percent of respondents self-reported being unemployed.

[91] A parody of relational employment and patronal politics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRr3wzsOi1U&feature=share

Figure 5.5: Employment in Armenia

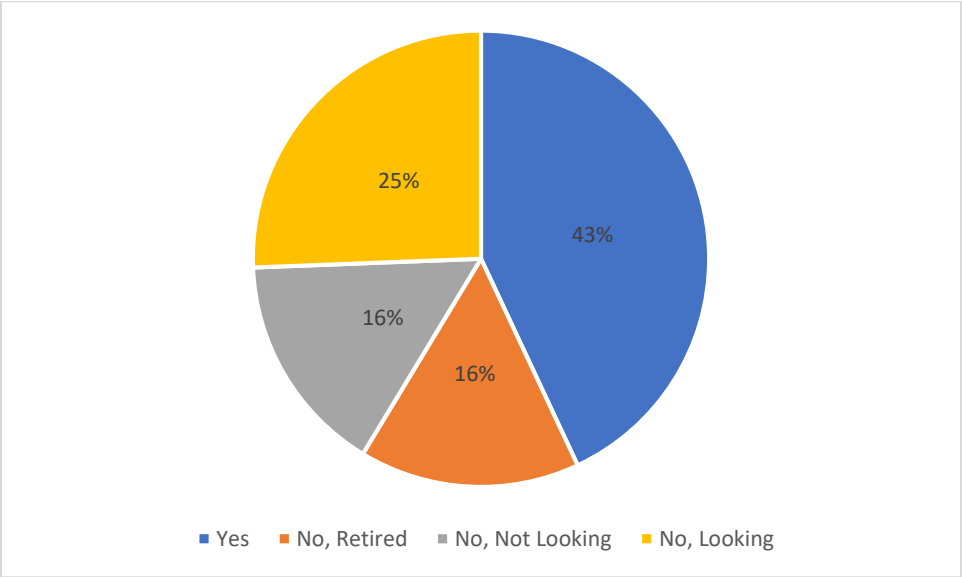
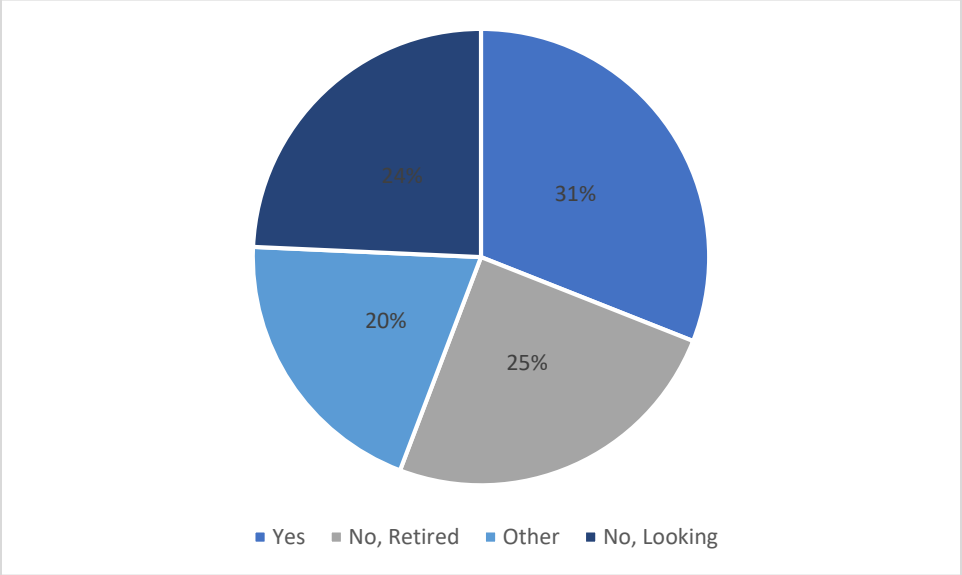


Figure 5.6: Employment in Georgia



Shifting our attention to the percentage of employed individuals, we find that forty-three percent of Armenian respondents disclosed being employed, while thirty-one percent of Georgian respondents mentioned being employed. Despite the different wording of the employment questionnaire (see Chapter 3), we can make comparisons between Armenian

employed respondents and Georgian employed respondents because both question type segregate employed respondents from others.

Figure 5.7: Employment and Vote Preference (Armenia)

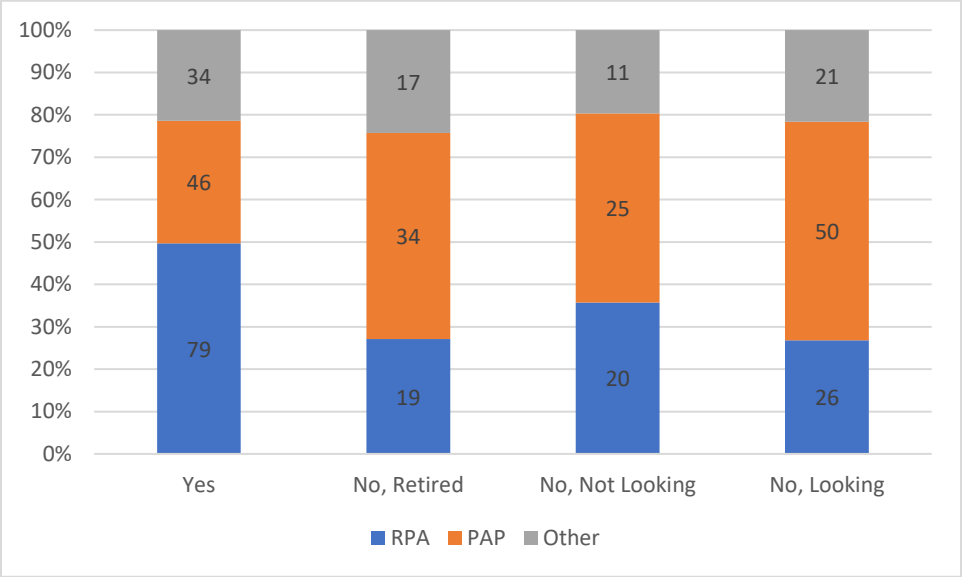
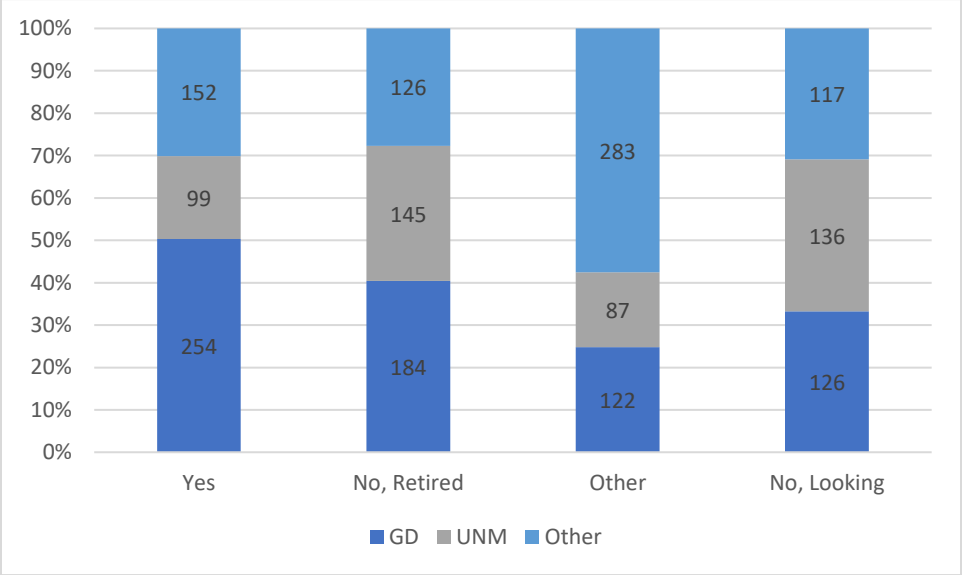


Figure 5.8: Employment and Vote Preference (Georgia)



In Chapter Two, hypothesis H_{5a} and H_{5b} proposed a positive association between employment status and an incumbent vote intention. Figures 5.7 and 5.8 lend some support towards this assumption. When distributing employment status across vote intention, we find that in both samples the largest percent of incumbent vote intention is among employed respondents. In the Armenian sample, among respondents who disclosed being employed, fifty-percent intended to vote for the RPA. This statistic is almost twice the size of RPA support among unemployed respondents, at just twenty-seven percent. Interestingly, fifty-two percent of unemployed respondents disclosed a vote intention for PAP, a populous opposition party.

In Georgia, the incumbent government also maintains fifty-percent support among employed respondents, the highest percentage of the four employment groups. The opposition, by contrast, maximizes it support among the unemployed and retired. The fact that employed voters are increasingly supportive of the incumbent whereas retired and unemployed respondents are increasingly supportive of the opposition suggests that socioeconomic conditions may be the reason for the diverging support.

Household Income

Household income is perhaps the most salient measure of socioeconomic wellbeing. In the second chapter, I posited that household income would be positively related to a vote for the incumbent in both Armenia and Georgia. The 2017 ArmES and the 2016 GPAS asked respondents about their household earnings in local currency.[92] Figures 5.9 and 5.10 present the distribution of monthly household income. Not surprisingly, both figures are skewed to the left,

[92] The Armenian currency is referred to as the Dram (֏) and the exchange rate is approximately 480 to 1. That is, 480 Drams is worth approximately one U.S. Dollar. The Georgian currency is called the Lari (₾) and the exchange rate is approximately three to 1. That is, 2.7 Lari is worth approximately one U.S. Dollar.

signifying decreasing number of households with larger incomes. In Armenia, the income bracket with the highest percentage of respondents was household incomes between 80,000 AMD to 149,000 AMD, which translates to $150 to $310. Out of 948 respondents who disclosed their household income, only thirteen (approximately one-percent) reported earning more than 700,000 AMD, or almost 1,500 USD.

In Georgia, the income distribution is oriented more towards the center. The bracket with the largest number of respondents was household incomes between 261 GEL to 400 GEL, which translates between 100 USD to 150 USD. Most Georgian households disclosed monthly income between 50 USD and 300 USD. As a percentage, approximately three percent of Georgian households were income earners in the top bracket. Overall, the household income distribution in both samples points toward a population that located at the lower income brackets.

In Figures 5.11 and 5.12, we do not seem to uncover a bivariate relationship between higher household income and support for the incumbent. In Armenia, the existence of a non-relationship may be because there are not enough households at higher income levels that disclosed their vote intention. Turning to the RPA's main opposition, we find that support for the PAP was common with lower income households. In fact, almost fifty percent of individuals at the lowest income bracket preferred the PAP.

Figure 5.9: Household Income in Armenia

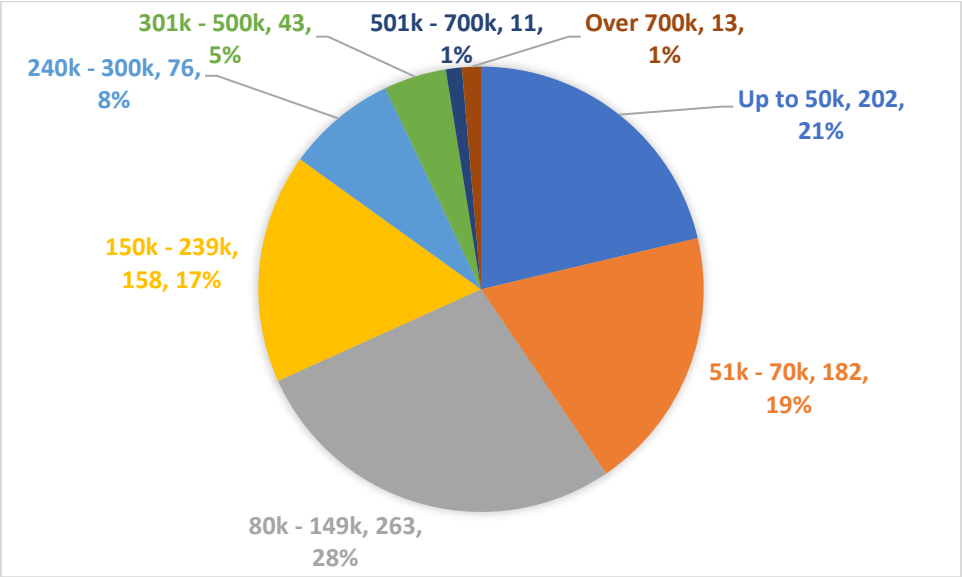


Figure 5.10: Household Income in Georgia

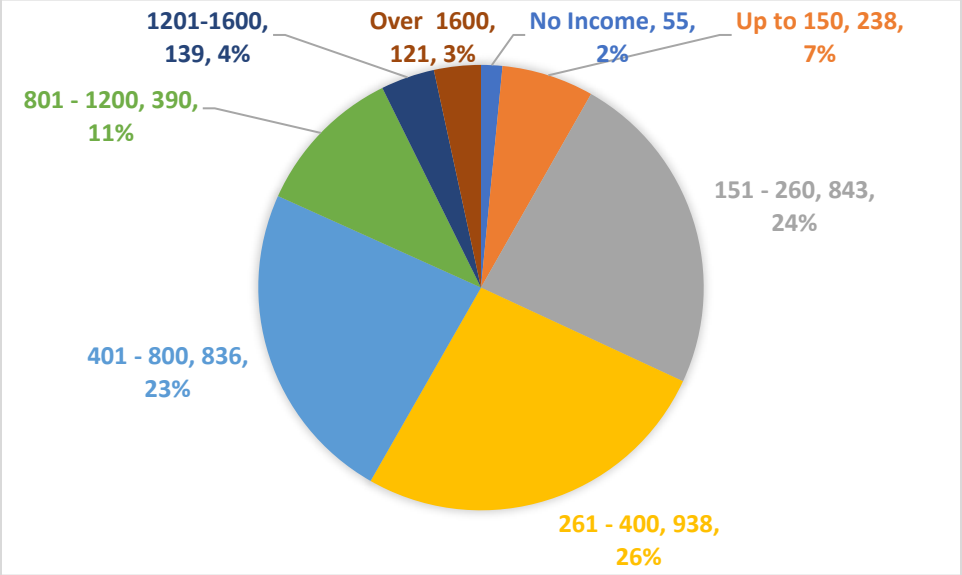


Figure 5.11: Income and Vote Preference (Armenia)

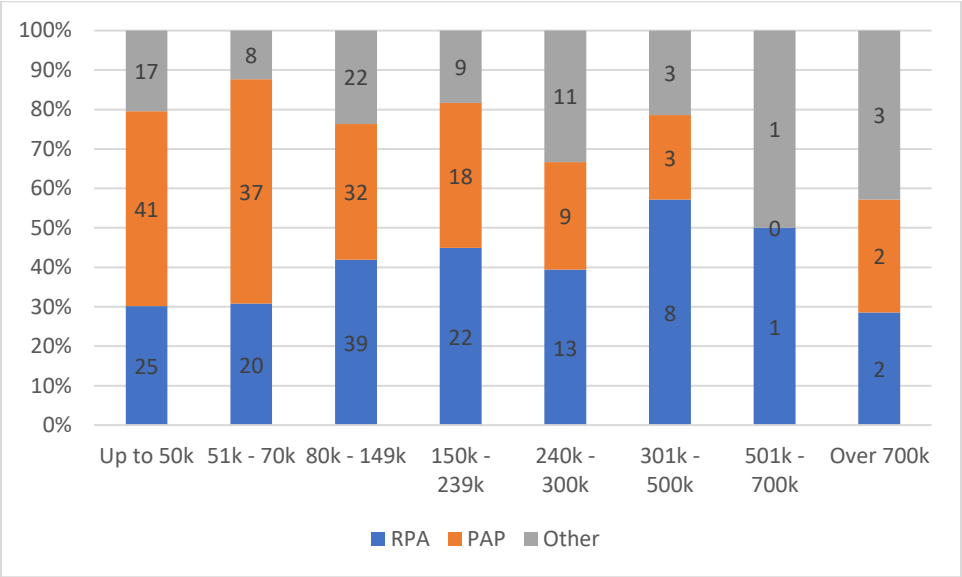


Figure 5.12: Income and Vote Preference (Georgia)

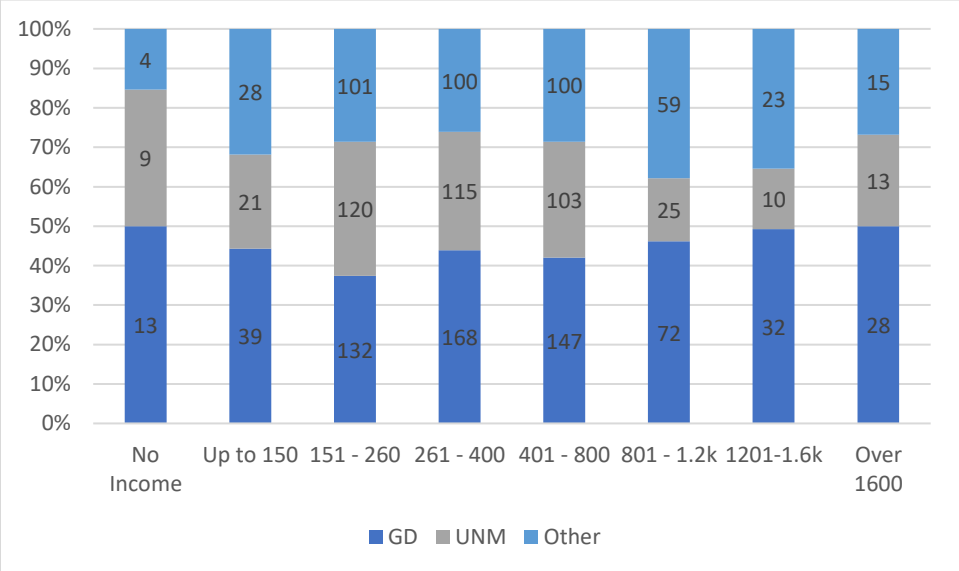


Figure 5.12 plots the cross-tabulation for Georgian voters. Here too, a positive linear relationship between higher income levels and support for Georgian Dream is not evident. Percentage-wise, both lower income and higher income brackets seem to disclose a vote intention for Georgian Dream. Moreover, support for the incumbent government is the lowest

among middle income earners, who also demonstrate greater support for Georgian Dream's main opposition, the UNM. Overall, the bivariate plots fail to provide preliminary evidence of higher income earners favoring the incumbent government.

Bivariate Correlations

With the following preliminary descriptive relationships in mind, this section provides a further test of association between the dependent variable and the three socioeconomic indicators. I rely on the Kendall's Tau-b to measure the level of correlation present between the incumbent vote intention and the education, employment status, and household income. Like other measures of correlation, the Tau-b statistic ranges from 0 to 1. Values that are closer to 0 suggest weak or no correlation, whereas values that are closer to 1 suggest strong or perfect correlation.

Table 5.1: Socioeconomic Indicators and Incumbent Vote Intention (Armenia)	
Education (higher educated = 1, others = 0)	0.0539*
Employment Status (employed = 1, others = 0)	0.0917***
Household Income (upper quartile = 1, others = 0)	0.0383

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

Table 5.2: Socioeconomic Indicators and Incumbent Vote Intention (Georgia)	
Education (higher educated = 1, others = 0)	0.0860***
Employment Status (employed = 1, others = 0)	0.0580***
Household Income (upper quartile = 1, others = 0)	0.0447***

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

Table 5.1 presents the correlation levels for the Armenian sample. All three variables demonstrate low levels of correlation and thus a weak association between each socioeconomic indicators and incumbent vote intention. In addition, only two of the three variables are in the expected direction. Starting with education, we notice a positive relationship between education and RPA vote intention ($p \leq .10$). The direction of the relationship is counter to hypothesis H_{4a}.

The next variable, employment status, also demonstrates a positive relationship with RPA vote intention ($p \leq .01$), but here the direction of the relationship is in accordance with hypothesis H_{5a}. Finally, the correlation between household income and RPA vote intention is in the expected direction. However, the association is not only weak but also statistically insignificant. Thus, we find support for two of the three socioeconomic variables.

In Table 5.2, the direction of the correlation estimates for the Georgian sample mirrors the results in the Armenian sample. Despite being statistically significant ($p \leq .01$), the positive correlation between education and Georgian Dream vote intention is contrary to hypothesis H_{4b}. The direction of the correlation estimate for employment status is both statistically significant ($p \leq .01$) and in the expected direction. Finally, the correlation estimate for household income is in the same direction as predicted by hypothesis H_{6b} and is statistically significant ($p \leq .01$). Overall the socioeconomic indicators in the Georgian sample outperform similar indicators in the Armenian sample. One unexpected result that was discovered in the earlier section, and substantiated in this section, is the tendency for higher educated respondents to support the incumbent governments in both Armenia and Georgia. In the next section, I analyze these relationships using a multivariate analysis.

Inferential Results: Armenia

Are socioeconomic indicators a determinant of incumbent support? The pair of tables below provide the regression output for the probability of an incumbent vote intention after the inclusion of the three socioeconomic covariates. In Tables 5.3 and 5.4, the addition of education, employment status, and household income improves the predictability of the overall model as evidenced by the higher LR chi-square statistic and the pseudo R-squared term.

The addition of the three socioeconomic indicators to the Armenian model results in only employment status reaching the minimum statistical significance threshold ($p \leq .01$) and in the expected direction. Armenian respondents who disclosed being employed are six percentage points more likely to vote for the RPA than non-employed respondents. This confirms a similar relationship discovered with the bivariate illustration and tau-b correlation methodological approaches. The robustness of this relationship is shown by the constant statistical significance throughout the three trials, although the level of significance decreases ($p \leq .05$) once standard errors are clustered around the region.

Table 5.3: Socioeconomic Vote Determinants (Armenia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.09*** (.03)	.08*** (.03)	-.09 (.06)
Female	.03 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.03 (.03)
Rural	-.03 (.03)	-.04 (.03)	-.03 (.03)
College Educated	.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Employed	.06*** (.02)	.06*** (.02)	.06** (.03)
Top Quartile HH Income	.03 (.03)	.04 (.03)	.03 (.03)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	1,059	1,059	1,059
LR Chi^2	23.09***	46.94***	
Wald Chi^2			19.41***
Pseudo R^2	.03	.06	.03

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Beyond this, we also witness that the age covariate retains its statistically significant relationship from the output in Chapter 4. The rest four sociological indicators fail to impact RPA vote intention. The relationship between household income and RPA vote intention is statistically insignificant despite the coefficient estimate being in the predicted direction. The

relationship between education and RPA vote share is not only statistically insignificant but the sign of the coefficient estimate is in the opposite direction. In the regions fixed-effects trial, accounting for respondents from Armenia's eleven regions keeps the model largely unchanged. The addition of region-specific clustered standard errors, in the third trial, impacts the significance of the age variable. Here, the employment status becomes the sole sociological predictor of an RPA vote. Overall, the four of the six sociological covariates perform quite poorly in predicting RPA vote intention. Although being a young individual may dissuade an Armenian voter from supporting the RPA, being employed increases the probability of an RPA vote.

An illustration of the output from Table 5.3 is found in Figure 5.13. Here we notice that that the confidence intervals in two of the six sociological covariates do not cross the zero threshold, suggesting that age and employment status are statistically significant. The illustration also demonstrates the relatively large confidence intervals of each covariate, a finding that mirrors the illustration in Figure 4.19. The fact that age and employment status impact RPA vote intention lead one to question the substantive significance of each covariate. Figure 5.14 illustrates the substantive significance of both age and employment status. Here, we find a linear downward slopped line that illustrates a probability of RPA vote intention of approximately ten percentage points between Soviet and post-Soviet respondents. On the right side of the illustration, we see the substantive significance of employment status. Both lines are relatively inelastic suggesting larges changes in RPA vote intention between the two types of age groups and employment status. However, substantive significance of the employment covariate appears relatively small vis-à-vis respondent age.

Figure 5.13: Regression Coefficient Plot (Armenia)

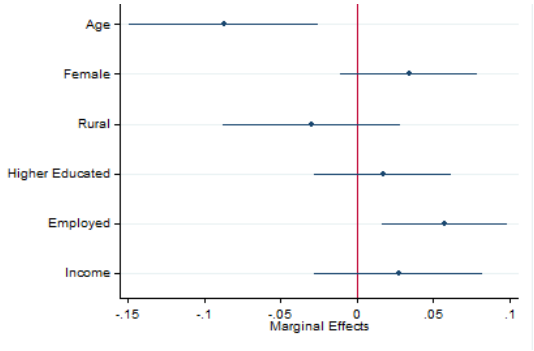
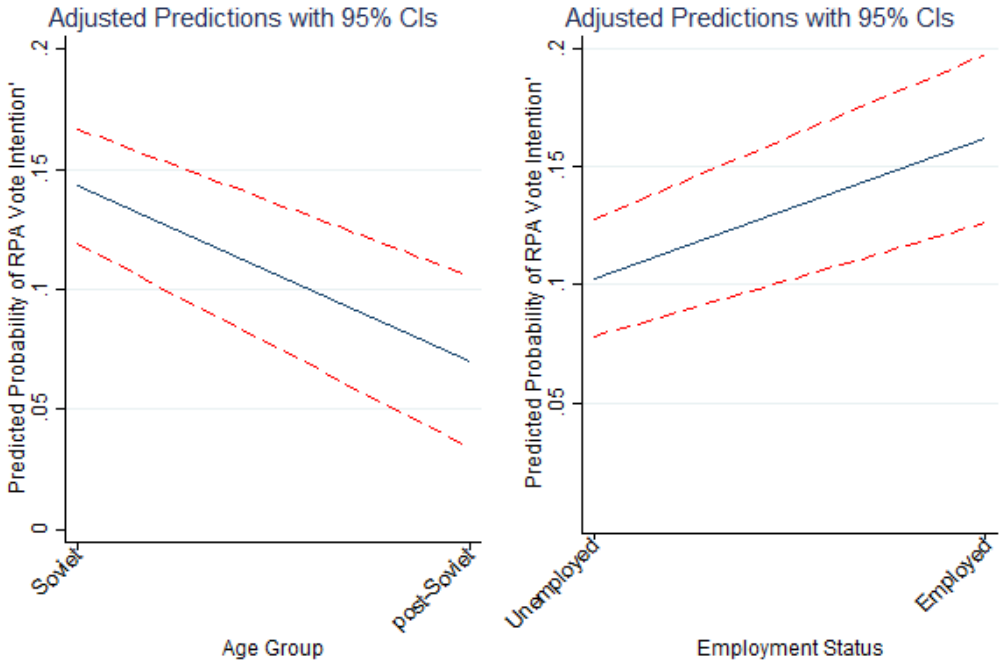


Figure 5.14: Adjusted Predictions of Age and Employment Status



Inferential Results: Georgia

Table 5.4 presents the output for the Georgian electorate. The inclusion of the socioeconomic covariates improves the overall predictability of the model when comparing the LR Chi-squared and pseudo R-squared terms to Table 4.4. Moving on to the three covariates of interest, we notice that in the baseline trial all three covariates are statistically significant. That

said, the direction of the education coefficient estimate is contrary to hypothesis H_{4b}, College educated Georgians are five percentage points more likely to vote for Georgian Dream. Beyond the educative effect, we find that individuals who are employed are two percentage points more likely to vote for the incumbent. A larger magnitude is recorded by the household income covariate, which suggests that Georgians in the top quartile of household income are five percentage points more likely to vote for Georgian Dream. Overall, the three socioeconomic indicators perform quite well, and we can conclude that the sociological elements within the Georgian vote function is predominately driven by socioeconomic, instead of sociodemographic, variables.

Table 5.4: Socioeconomic Vote Determinants (Georgia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.10*** (.02)	-.10*** (.02)	-.11*** (.03)
Female	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Rural	.06*** (.01)	-.01 (.03)	.06 (.05)
Higher Educated	.05*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.05** (.02)
Employed	.02** (.01)	.03** (.01)	.02** (.01)
Top Quartile HH Income	.05** (.02)	.03 (.02)	.05** (.02)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	4,080	4,080	4,080
LR Chi^2	89.03***	355.87***	
Wald Chi^2			109.01***
Pseudo R^2	.02	.10	.02

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

In the second trial, the inclusion of region fixed effects slightly the model. Here the rural settlement and household income covariates are no longer statically significant at the minimum threshold level ($p \leq .01$). However, when the standard errors become clustered around Georgia's

regions the income covariate regains its significance level ($p \leq .01$). Regarding the residence covariate, a similar result was found in the output with the sociodemographic model in the previous chapter. This suggests that once we account for within region similarity, the impact of rural residence is nullified.

Figure 5.15: Regression Coefficient Plot (Georgia)

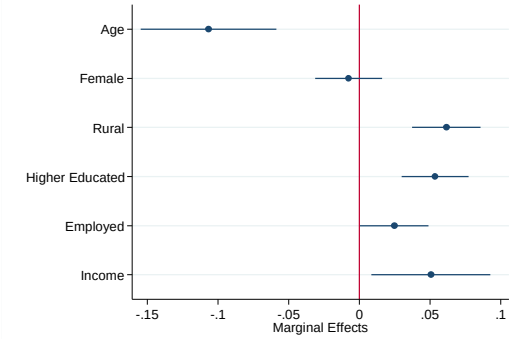
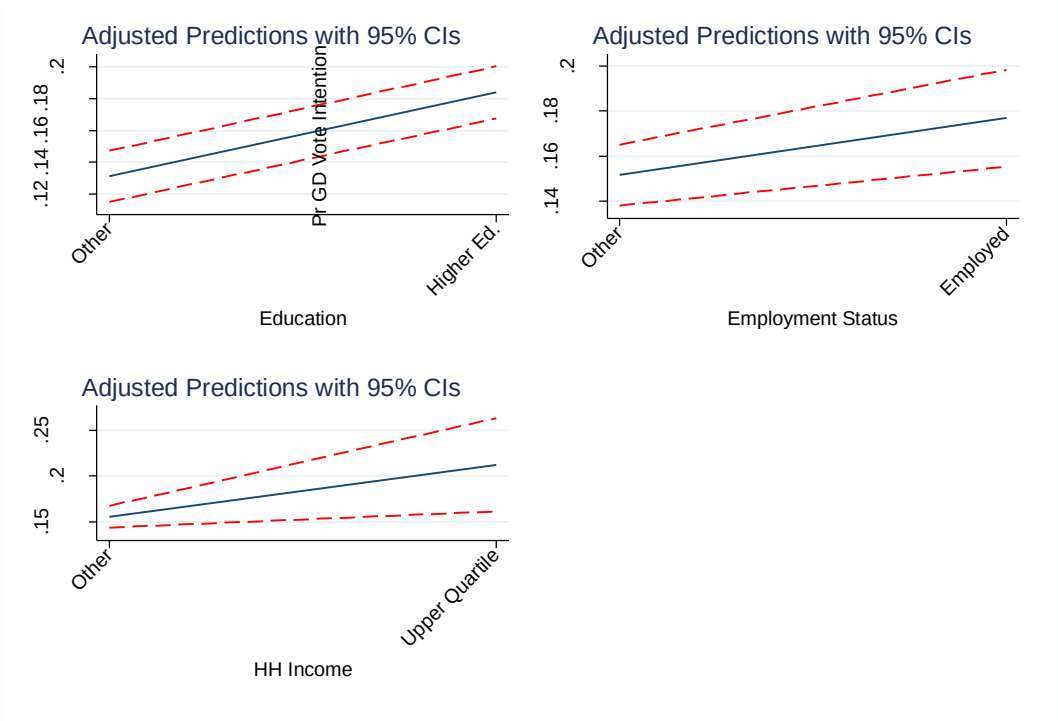


Figure 5.16: Adjusted Predictions of Education, Employment, and Income



To analyze the substantive significance of the sociological vote predictors, Figure 5.16 plots the predictive margins of the three socioeconomic covariates. All three plots have a positive slopped line with the red dashes signifying the ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Substantive significance can be interpreted with by observing the inelasticity of each line. The larger the elasticity, the small the substantive significance. All three lines appear to be elastic thus suggesting a lack of substantive significance in all three plots. For example, the change from 'other' to being 'employed' is associated with a change in the predictive margins of only three percentage points.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the impact of socioeconomic indicators on Armenian and Georgian political behavior. I find that employment status is the sole socioeconomic predictor of the vote for both the Armenian and Georgian electorate. The decades-long mismanagement of the socioeconomic development of the Armenian and Georgian voter has, unsurprisingly, led both electorates to emphasize employment as a condition for incumbent support. Aside from employment, the Georgian vote function is also influenced by higher education and household income. While Georgian Dream support among higher income earners is theoretically valid, the positive relationship between higher education and Georgian Dream support is counter theoretical and unexpected. What would compel higher educated Georgians to support the party of power?

One possible explanation is the increased political polarization in higher education institutions, which was exemplified by an election of a pro-Saakashvili appointee to the chancellor senate board at Tbilisi State University, in 2016. The numerous human rights abuses scandals during Saakashvili's second term triggered a fallout between university student

organizations and their support for Saakashvili and UNM. This was followed by an increasingly contentious political environment between UNM and Georgian Dream, which resulted in the polarization of student groups in higher education settings.

Another explanation relates to the bureaucratization of higher educated individuals into state institutions. Under Georgian Dream, government employment qualifications have been revised to include preferential consideration of applicants with a graduate education. This may influence how college educated individuals perceive Georgian Dream. All in all, socioeconomic indicators appear to be an all-encompassing vote predictor for the Georgian electorate but not the Armenian electorate.

CHAPTER 6: PARTY IDENTIFICATION & THE VOTE

In western liberal democracies, party identification is the foundation of one's vote choice. During an election season, the voter's psychological attachment to a party weighs heavily in their vote function. Candidates attach themselves to party labels and some voters, in turn, cast ballots for a candidate because of the party label.[93] The role of parties in post-Soviet politics has largely been defined through patronal and institutional lens (Hale 2006; 2015). Parties are considered largely void of organizational structure, ideological distinction, and tend to be tools for charismatic leaders. As pointed out by Triesman (2009), Russia's political parties associate themselves with charismatic leaders, not the other way around. For example, United Russia takes every opportunity to associate its political brand with Putin.[94] Whereas in the West, candidates take every opportunity to remind voters about the party banner under which they are competing. The inability of parties to build an independent and durable apparatus outside of a personality cult has limited the development of party politics in the post-Soviet space. The central question in this chapter is whether party identification can influence the vote choice amongst voters in Armenia and Georgia.

In the Caucasus, identification with the candidate (and not necessarily the party) exceeds the *Putinization* of United Russia. For example, in the weeks leading up to the 2018 Armenian parliamentary election, a local television station interviewed selected voters in a small village, *Lernahovit*, about their partisan preferences (Azatytyun 2018).[95] Surprisingly, the male village elders voiced their support for both Prime Minister Pashinyan and RPA incumbent Karen

[93] These partisan voters often engage in straight-ticket voting to minimize the information cost associated with voting. For partisan voters, the party label is a voting heuristic by which they align their policy preferences with the candidate's.
[94] In fact, the popularity of Putin exceeds that of United Russia (Levada Center 2019).
[95] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd2Qt-jZCMs

Karapetyan.[96] Although the elders supported Pashinyan's velvet revolution against the RPA, they also disclosed their primary allegiance to Karapetyan, not the RPA. After some confusion, the elders disclosed their support toward Karapetyan was because of his connections to the village. Karapetyan, a wealthy businessman, had grown up in the village and, according to the elders, had taken good care of the villagers.[97] Thus, their loyalty was to Karapetyan and not necessarily the RPA.[98]

The above example suggests that party identification in the Caucasus can take the form of candidate identification. This claim is furthered by the practice of Armenian and Georgian voters to reference political parties by their de facto party leader. 'Misha's party (UNM); Serzh's party (RPA); Bidzina's party (Georgian Dream); Gago's party (PAP)' and so on. This type of partisanship is quite different than what is witnessed in the West. Whereas American partisan voters possess a psychological attachment to a political party and may engage in straight ticket voting, voters in the Caucasus and the rest of the post-Soviet space maintain a psychological attachment to the party leader.[99] At times, this can lead to confusion at the voting booth when voters are unable to associate their preferred candidate to his or her party.[100]

One major implication from the process of party identification via candidate identification, is to what extent does the former influence the vote function of the electorate? If

[96] Karapetyan is the brother of Armenian-Russian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan.
[97] The elders disclosed that he helped them find work in Armenia and Russia.
[98] The village elders further stated that if Karapetyan does not seek re-election, they would vote for Pashinyan's party. However, in the event Karapetyan is in RPA's party list, their vote will go to him and the RPA.
[99] This is the case with Russia's Liberal Democratic Party of Russian (LDPR). Russia's third largest party (after United Russian and the CPRF) is led by a charismatic, and often erratic, leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky. LDPR's electoral success is driven entirely by the popularity of Zhirinovsky.
[100] Fortunately, these types of occurrences are not as common. However, and based on anecdotal evidence, they tend to occur more with politically disengaged members of the electorate and elderly voters.

the electorate's true psychological attachment is to the candidate or leader of the party, can voters accurately relate their affiliation of a specific party to their vote choice?

In this chapter, I trace the impact of partisanship in the vote function of Armenian and Georgian voters. The rest of the chapter is divided into five sections. First, I discuss the formation of parties of power and party identification in the Caucasus. Initially, the political system in both Armenia and Georgia was quite unstable resulting in volatile shifts between parties of power. However, in the case of Armenia, the RPA was able to consolidate power and govern for almost two decades. In Georgia, the unstable nature of its competitive authoritarian regime resulted in the government failing to hold power beyond two election cycles. The different trajectories between the parties of power also impacted the development of party identification. Whereas, the stability of the RPA led to a constant base of RPA identifiers, in the case of Georgia, the failure of a single governing party to maintain power beyond two election cycles limited the full development of incumbent partisan attachments.

The second section introduces bivariate illustrations between party identification and incumbent vote intention. This provides a baseline, descriptive test of hypotheses H_{7a} and H_{7b}. The next section advances the bivariate methodological analysis by testing the tau-b correlation between party identification and the dependent variable. The fourth section adds the party identification covariate to the regression model from Chapter 5. The findings, across all three methodological tests, demonstrate that the incumbent vote function for both Armenian and Georgian voters is heavily influenced by partisanship. In addition, the inclusion of party identification does little to change the partial impact of sociological variables on the vote for the Armenian electorate. However, the addition of the partisanship covariate alters the quantity of statistically significant sociological covariates in the Georgian vote function. Given the strength

of partisanship in the vote function, what are the implications for party development in Armenia and Georgia? This is the concern of the concluding section of the chapter.

The Formation of Parties of Power and Party Identification in Armenia

Armenia's party system precedes its post-Soviet independence. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) fostered the creation of the first Republic of Armenia (1918-20), after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The short-lived state was then taken over by the Transcaucasia's communists and Armenia became a Soviet Socialist Republic between 1936 and 1991. Founded in 1988, the Armenian National Movement (ANM) was instrumental in bringing about the successful transition from Soviet Armenia to the Republic of Armenia. On September 21, 1991 when Armenia declared its independence the ANM was the dominant political party, and soon thereafter became Armenia's first party of power.

Armenian National Movement

The ANM dominated Armenian politics from 1990 to 1998. Despite lack of data on Armenian partisanship[101], we can presume that, initially, a majority of Armenians either identified with or felt close to the new party of power. This is because the ANM candidate, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, won Armenia's only free and fair election in 1991 with eighty-three percent of the vote.[102] The period between 1988 and 1991 was defined by a *pan-Armeno* cause:

[101] Armenia was included in the 1990 Survey of Soviet values (Duch 1990) and the 1992 Political Values in the Former Soviet Union (Duch 1992). However, only 32 respondents were interviewed (compared to 2,536 Russian respondents) and none were asked about their party identification.

[102] The presidency came down to three main contenders: Ter-Petrosyan, supported by the ANM; Sos Sargsyan, supported by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF); and Paruyr Hayrikyan, supported by the Union for National Self Determination (UND). Ter-Petrosyan presented himself as a moderate candidate, who opposed recognition of Karabakh as part of Armenia, supported economic reforms, and a maintained a dovish attitude towards Russia and Turkey. The latter two candidates presented more nationalistic messages, including the annexation of Karabakh into Armenia. Ter-Petrosyan's main opposition, Hayrikyan, was exiled from Armenia between 1988 and 1990, a period which witnessed the apex calls for Armenia's independence. Thus, an overwhelming majority of Armenians associated independent Armenia with Ter-Petrosyan.

the security and self-determination of Karabakh Armenians and independence of Soviet Armenia. This united the Armenian people around the movement's leader: Ter-Petrosyan. However, following Armenia's independence and Ter-Petrosyan's presidential victory, the country's first president began to build his patronal network around the ANM (Hale 2015). As described by Hale, the ANM provided the formal structure for Ter-Petrosyan to secure loyalty from the low-level entrepreneurs. In return, these businessmen could rely on favorable treatment by the government.

Ter-Petrosyan and the ANM's support was structured through chains of acquittances "…beginning with family members and relatives of the candidates and including a network of dependents" (Dudwick 1997: 95). Throughout ANM's governing tenure, Ter-Petrosyan was the face of the party. Many ANM partisans were in actuality *Levonakan* ("Levonists") and the psychological attachment was more toward Ter-Petrosyan than toward the ANM. Thus, upon Ter-Petrosyan's sudden resignation, in 1998, the ANM lost its loyalists and immediately collapsed. Despite creating *Levonakan* identities among voters, Ter-Petrosyan also hindered the growth of partisan attachments in the country. Recall that the Soviet system created anti-partisans, who were distrustful of parties and the entire system, due to its single-party rule. Upon ascending to the presidency, Ter-Petrosyan governed over a period of "mutation" within the ANM[103], leading to the banning of Armenia's oldest party – the ARF, and creating a support coalition that privatized state assets and plundered state resources. By the time Ter-Petrosyan had resigned, the median Armenian voter had returned to the Soviet days of loathing the government, being distrustful of political parties and the entire political system

[103] Libaridian (1999) described the splintering of ANM throughout Ter-Petrosyan's tenure as a process of "mutation" (23).

Republican Party of Armenia

Armenia's second party of power governed Armenia from 1999 to 2018.[104] This period included two presidents, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, who each served two terms. RPA's initial governance strategy differed from the ANM. Whereas Ter-Petrosyan dominated ANM's image, the RPA did not maintain a similar relationship with President Kocharyan, whom it supported during the latter's reelection bid in 2003. Kocharyan, for his part, also chose to create a distance between himself and the RPA. In fact, in both of his election campaigns (1998 and 2003), Kocharyan ran as an independent.

The Kocharyan era can be summed up through two developments: the expansion of patronalism and the double-digit growth of Armenia's economy. First, Armenia's second president expanded the scope of patronalism beyond Ter-Petrosyan's imagination. Whereas Armenia's first president ruled with a smaller number of oligarchic networks, Kocharyan expanded the politico-economic playfield to include dozens of Armenian oligarchs, some of whom had become RPA MPs in the National Assembly.[105] The RPA, in turn, was all too willing to allow members of Kocharyan's support coalition seek political power under their banner. This expansion not only increased Kocharyan's support coalition, it also led to loyalty from Armenian citizens whose socioeconomic status was directly or indirectly tied to the oligarchs. In return for Kocharyan allowing Armenia's oligarchs to operate in an uncompetitive economic market, the oligarchs used their business conglomerates to influence their employees to support the RPA and

[104] Although the RPA was a member of government since 1995 they were a junior coalition member until the after of the 1999 parliamentary elections.
[105] Aside from political power, an MP was a lucrative title because it carried a weight of prosecutorial immunity.

Kocharyan. Thus, RPA partisanship and political loyalty to Kocharyan was in part based on coercive tactics from sub-patrons and self-preservation in Armenia's socioeconomic strata.

Second, and despite the expansion of patronalism, Kocharyan governed over a period of economic prosperity in Armenia. The increase in Diaspora tourism and remittances from abroad provided Armenia with the necessary capital to socioeconomically 'catch up' with the latter, Soviet Armenia era. During this period, Armenia experienced a construction boom and a revitalization of its financial credit markets. The price of real estate began to appreciate. Banks and universal credit organizations (UCOs) increased their lending practices. The spoils of Armenia's economic growth, however, were not equally distributed, and an asymmetric amount of economic reward came largely to those who maintained personal connections with the regime. These "winners" then oriented their partisan attachment to the RPA by way of its leadership. This attachment was not due to the alignment of police preferences, or the so-called "national-conservative" ideology of the RPA. Rather, it was the outcome of patronal politics.

As Kocharyan's second term came to an end, Armenia's second president had groomed his protégé, Serzh Sargsyan, to assume the presidency. The 2008 presidential election witnessed the return of Ter-Petrosyan to challenge Sargsyan to become Armenia's third president. Sargsyan's relationship with RPA was considerably different as he ran under the RPA party banner and was victorious against Ter-Petrosyan. When the latter failed to concede the election and initiated protests, Kocharyan responded by ordering the military to disperse the protestors. On March 1, 2008 ten individuals were killed as a result of clashes between Armenia's police, armed forces and the protestors. Kocharyan responded to the period of instability by ordering a state of national emergency and preventing most forms of public political behavior. This draconian measure did not sit well with the international community, particularly the US and the

European Union. Both moved to criticize the behavior of Armenia's authorities. Thus, Sargsyan took the presidency amid international pressure to liberalize the political situation. As outlined by Levitsky and Way (2010), the initiation of liberal reforms to maintain international legitimacy was the beginning of the end for the RPA.

First, the RPA leadership sought to replace many of its oligarchic and criminally-prone MPs with a young cadre of technocrats, among them Arpine "Surb Arpi" Hovannisyan. Whereas the old class of RPA MPs were favorable towards taking coercive steps against the opposition, the new, younger and highly educated MPs were more methodical and preferred liberalizing policies towards the opposition. Second, the RPA and president Sargsyan allowed the opposition to periodically fill the streets and protest. Some of the protests were officially sanctioned, while most were not.[106] Finally, as Sargsyan's presidency was nearing its end due to term limits, the RPA amended Armenia's constitution and replaced its governing structure from a semi-presidential system to a parliamentary one. Sargsyan, in turn, promised not to run for the premier position. The reneging of the promise and RPA's nomination of Sargsyan for the prime ministerial position was RPA's biggest political mistake and brought an end to both Sargsyan and Armenia's second party of power.

During RPA's tenure, political attachment to the party came in the form of attachment to the leadership. Voters who identified with the RPA and preferred its governance were largely consumed by the personality its leaders or by personal acquittances with party members. This is further evidenced by party intensity among Armenian voters and how the electorate perceives voting. In the 2017 ArmES, when asked how likely RPA voters disagreed with their party, forty-

[106] During Kocharyan's tenure, opposition protests in Yerevan were quite scarce. Most were prevented before the planning stage.

one percent answered either "sometimes", "often", or "always." Moreover, when asked about the basis of voting in Armenia, thirty-nine percent answered that voting was based on either "personality of the head of the party" or "personal connections to the party."[107] Thus, the role of party attachments in Armenia stems largely from one's psychological attachment to a party leader or an economic pursuit.

The Formation of Parties of Power and Party Identification in Georgia

Post-Soviet Georgia has witnessed the rise and fall of three parties of power, two of which relinquished office through non-electoral means. Georgia's first incumbent government, Round Table Bloc (RTB), was a short-lived party of power that ushered in a period of volatile incumbency through the of mismanagement of authority. The dictatorial nature of RTB's leader and Georgia's first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, set the stage for a line of successors with an appetite for expansive presidential powers. In all three cases of power relinquishment, the opposition accused the incumbent president of exceeding his constitutional authority. The reoccurring reshuffling of the parties of power impacted the development of a stable partisan identification with governing parties.

Round Table Bloc (RTB)

RTB was a nationalist coalition that consisted of several small pro-independence parties which governed the country from 1990 to 1992. The bloc was led by Gamsakhurdia, a Soviet dissident and a staunch Georgian nationalist, whose success was mainly due to his charisma.[108]

[107] Compared to twenty-eight percent who answered voting is based on "issue-related information."
[108] Gamsakhurdia's realized the anti-system and anti-communist sentiment of the Georgian people and relied on his charismatic leadership to ascend to power. Jones (2015) considers charisma as "…Gamsakhurdia's most dependable source of power" (93).

Demanding immediate independence from the Soviet Union, Gamsakhurdia's rhetoric gained popularity across Georgia and led the RTB to oust the Georgian Communists in the 1990 Georgian Soviet Supreme elections. Not surprisingly, the election was defined by personality types and a lack of differences between party platforms (Jones 2015). As described by Aves (1991), "[V]oters were really being asked to cho[o]se between personalities and styles" (Aves 29). The election also exposed the dangerous sentiments of nationalism as RTC moved to disband regional and ethnic parties and promote ethnic Georgian identity.

The following year Gamsakhurdia successfully won Georgia's first presidential election. Similar to the 1990 election, the presidential campaign was one of personality types. As Jones points out, "[m]ost who voted for Gamsakhurdia voted for the man, not a program" (Jones 2015: 54). Gamsakhurdia tapped into the multicultural fear of ethnic Georgians who, in certain regions, found themselves the minority within their own country. His support was largely limited to the rural areas, for his politics was the politics of anti-elitism (Jones 2015). The Gamsakhurdia voter was an identity voter as well as an economically and socially underprivileged voter who had witnessed a *nomenclatura* class spring up and dominate politics during the Soviet period.

The Gamsakhurdia government (1990-2) was short-lived. Despite presiding over economic instability, Gamsakhurdia placed priority of Georgian identity over economic policy. Politically, the Gamsakhurdia era witnessed repressive tactics towards opposition blocs, none more so than the 1991 expulsion of the Communist party, the second largest party, from the Georgian parliament (Jones 2015: 153). The beginning of the end of his rule occurred when Gamsakhurdia began to gradually consolidate power around himself by expanding presidential authority, minimized the veto power of the parliament and retaining complete control of state of emergency powers (Jones 2015: 88). This eventually led to his ouster in January of 1992.

During Gamsakhurdia's rule, the psychological attachment of the Georgian voter was not necessarily to RTC but to its leader. This is further evidenced by the collapse of RTC following the successful coup against Gamsakhurdia and by the ability to his supporters to violently support the deposed lead. Dubbed the *'Zviadists'*, thousands of staunch supporters failed to accept the military coup against Gamsakhurdia, and Georgia erupted into a civil conflict.[109]

Citizens Union of Georgia / For a New Georgia

Georgia's second party of power, the Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG), was formed by the country's second president, Eduard Shevardnadze.[110] Founded in 1993, the CUG consisted of several factions. First, there were the Soviet holdovers, or a group of Georgian Communist Party members who were associated with Shevardnadze during his tenure as Soviet Georgia's First Secretary. Second, the CUG included a reformer faction consisting mainly of young politicians whose political and economic ambitions did not fully align with that of Shevardnadze. Finally, there were the Georgian "Mafiosi" whose membership in the CUG was largely based on maintaining power and control over their personal assets (Haindrava 2003). The latter group lacked political experience or policy ambition. In exchange for a preferential economic playing field the Mafiosi made sure local communities supported the Shevardnadze's candidacy. The CUG, according to Haindrava, "turned into something resembling a limited liability company" (Haindrava 23) with each stockholder's profit allocation resembling their own share.

This composition of CUG made the party of power doomed to fail. The party's connection with the Georgian criminal underworld resulted in some of the region's worst cases

[109] The *Zviadist* were largely contained in Western Georgia, but their ambitions threatened the totality of the Georgian state (Kukhianidze 2009).
[110] A former foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Shevardnadze assumed leadership of the independent Georgian state after successfully initiating an end to violence among rivaling factions.

of corruption and resource mismanagement. Between 1995 and 1999, the popularity of Shevardnadze and the CUG plummeted. The once savior of the Georgian state[111] was now a facilitator of the corruptive norms in Georgia's political and social life. Shevardnadze's inability to address corruption and the patronal nature of Georgia's political system further fractionalized the CUG and led party members to defect from the party of power. The New Rights Party, the United National Movement, and the United Democrats were all created by former CUG members. Although initially loyal to Shevardnadze, the party leaders started to become more critical of Shevardnadze's policy paralysis. Shevardnadze attempted to cease the defections by relinquishing the position of CUG chair, in September 2001. This created a leadership vacuum and furthered CUG's problems. Following Shevardnadze's departure, the CUG further fractionalized with the creation of Together Again and the Alliance for New Georgia factions. Without Shevardnadze and a leadership crisis, the CUG collapsed (Haindrava 2003: 25).

The failure of CUG forced Shevardnadze to scramble for a new party prior to the 2003 parliamentary elections. For a New Georgia was a political bloc that combined several political organizations of varying ideological camps. For example, the bloc included both the National-Democratic Party, who advocated for aligning Georgia more towards Western norms, and who presented an anti-Russian platform, and the Georgian Socialists, who advocated for aligning Georgia more towards Russia and were skeptical of western norms (Chikhladze and Chikhladze 2005). Despite attempting to form a party of power, For a New Georgia lacked the in-depth patronal system present within the CUG. While patronage systems still maintained control over local ethnic minorities, the combination of CUG's collapse and the growth of western-backed

[111] Shevardnadze assumed the leadership position due to his political experience. Upon becoming president, he quashed regional insurrection and reached out to both the West and Russia.

non-governmental organizations and activist groups created a climate hostile to Shevardnadze's tenure. On the eve the 2003 Parliamentary elections, the Shevardnadze post-Soviet political era looked quite similar to the Shevardnadze Soviet tenure; both abundant in political patronage, yet scarce in reform.

United National Movement

Georgia's third party of power was the result of the rose revolution. Following the November 2003 parliamentary elections, which bring about For a New Georgia victory, the opposition failed to accept the results and began round-the-clock protests. Despite growing calls for new elections, even within Shevardnadze's administration, the Georgian president did not discredit the electoral results. This proved to be a fateful mistake, as holding new parliamentary elections would not directly threaten Shevardnadze's presidency (Jones 2015). The end of the Shevardnadze era came on November 24, when after informal talks with Putin and foreign minister Ivanov, Georgia's second president submitted his resignation.[112] The rose revolution ushered in Georgia's first non-violent transfer of power.

In the aftermath of the rose revolution, United National Movement (UNM), became Georgia's party of power and Saakashvili its third president. However, the western-educated leader and his party did not proceed with the standard practices of a party of power: leveraging power and state resource extraction. Instead Saakashvili moved swiftly to tackle the corrupt and inefficient bureaucratic organs left behind by Shevardnadze. First, Saakashvili tackled the central

[112] According to Companjen (2010) and Kandelaki and Meladze (2007), Shevardnadze's inability to understand and account for the role of civil society groups in Georgia eventually led to his political demise. Shevardnadze's political pathology consisted of a total withdrawal from the Tbilisi street, which by 2003 had witnessed a rise of civil society organizations, a gradual rebalancing of politics between Shevardnadze and his young cadre, and synthesis between his young cadre and civil society organizations. The aftermath of the 2003 election demionstrated the strength of this synthesis.

problem facing Georgia: corruption. The newly elected president quickly restructured the police force[113], closed a number of black markets operating throughout Georgia and decentralized Georgia's education system (Companjen 2010). Next, he began to shrink the size of the Georgia's federal bureaucracy and initiate neoliberal economic reforms (Jones 2006; Shubladze and Khundadze 2017). Finally, Saakashvili's administration began the process of transitional justice to hold past officials accountable. However, these reforms did not increase the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people (Shubladze and Khundadze 2017).[114] Moreover, the process of initiating reforms and state building was a gradual one that irritated Saakashvili and UNM (Wheatley 2009). Thus, in 2004 both moved to amend Georgia's constitution and expand the scope of presidential powers.

The increasing coercive tactics by Saakashvili and the UNM were met with increasing hostility on the part of Georgian voters, especially civil society organizations. Groups accused the government of human rights abuses (Eurasia net 2007; Shubladze and Khundadze 2017), the torture of prisoners by the police, and the failed policy that led to conflict with South Ossetia in 2008. Saakashvili's second term (2008-12) was marked by further isolation of this main voting bloc: young, educated Georgians. Moreover, the UNM's concentration on post-material issues led the party to neglect social welfare concerns. For many voters, UNM was starting to resemble CUG.[115]

[113] In post-Soviet republics the police force is among the largest corrupt institutions. Their practice of "roving banditry" consists of demanding bribes from motor vehicle drivers to commit traffic violations.
[114] The average Georgian continued to be plagued by material concerns. Despite near double-digit growth rate during Saakashvili's first term (World Bank 2019), the Georgian electorate did not witness a substantial growth in their purchasing power. In fact, during this period Georgia's maintained the slowest growth of gross national income (GNI) in the Caucasus.
[115] During Saakashvili's second term, UNM began to increasingly rely on old, coercive practices to shore up support. For example, at the elite level, UNM pursued an uneven electoral playing field by requiring big businesses to financially support the party or risk going bankrupt (Shubladze and Kundadze 2017).

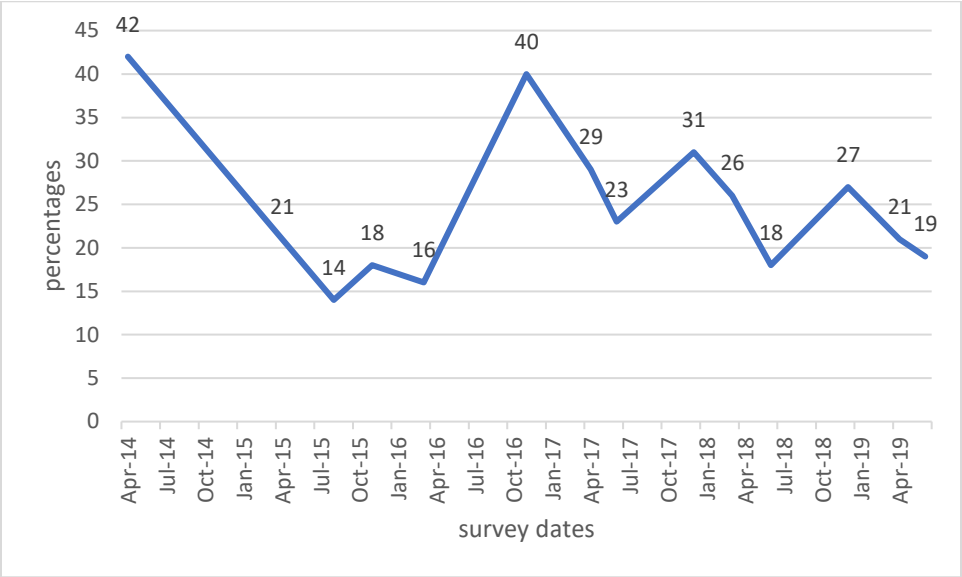
In 2011, a new political opposition entered the scene and posed an unprecedented challenge to UNM. Financed by Georgian billionaire Bizdina Ivanishvili, Georgian Dream presented itself as a party that would address the social welfare needs of the Georgian voter. Contrary to other existing parties, the financial weight of Georgian Dream was sponsored by Ivanishvili, whose Russian-based wealth limited the reach of UNM's ability go after his assets (Shubladze and Kundadze 2017). With a campaign that targeted poor and rural voters, Georgian Dream secured an electoral victory following the 2012 parliamentary elections. Then in 2013 Georgian Dream candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili defeated UNM candidate David Bakradze and ended UNM's political supremacy.

UNM's defeat was largely its own doing. The party that had inherited vital sociological voting blocs a decade earlier managed to lose them due to mismanaged policy prioritization during Saakashvili's first term and a return to patronal behavior during the latter's second term.

Georgian Dream

Having monopolized leadership in both electoral branches of government, Georgian Dream's electoral success is mainly due to its emphasis on social welfare and geopolitical stability. Georgia's current party of power maintains a large support base in rural areas and amongst low income voters. To further its hold on political power, the party of power passed a constitutional amendment in 2016 transitioning Georgia from a semi-presidential system to a parliamentary government. The 2018 presidential elections, which saw Georgian Dream candidate Salome Zurabishvili emerge as the winner, was the country's last presidential election to be determined by popular vote.

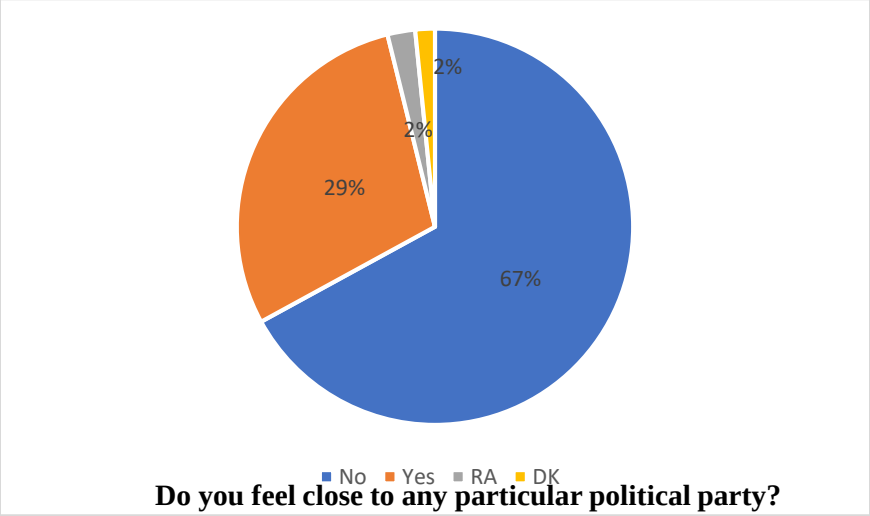
Figure 6.1: Georgian Dream Party Identification



Data availability from NDI's periodical public attitudes survey allows us to trace the evolution of party identification with Georgian Dream. The illustration in Figure 6.1 provides several insights about Georgian Dream party identification. First, we notice the volatile level of party affiliation on the part of Georgian voters. Between April 2014 and July 2015, the percentage of Georgians who identified with Georgian Dream decreased by twenty-eight percentage points. Second, the twin peaks of Georgian Dream partisanship occurred around election seasons. The first peak, April 2014, was reported five months after the 2013 presidential election. The second peak, October 2016, occurring during the 2016 parliamentary election. Finally, since October 2016 Georgian Dream has witnessed an overall decrease in partisanship. Overall, the unstable level of party identification with Georgia's party of power may be emblematic of the lack of long-term party affiliation.

Bivariate Relationships

Figure 6.2: Party Identification in Armenia

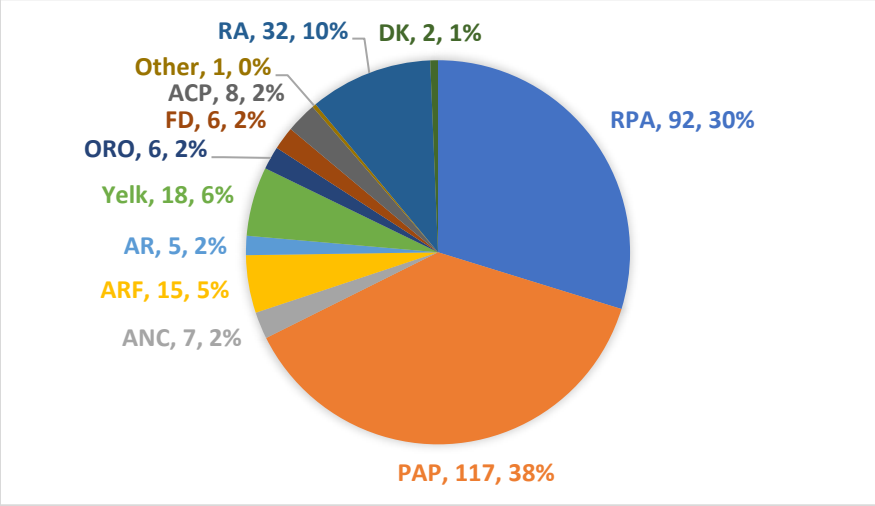


In the previous section, I traced the evolution of parties of power and the development of partisanship in the Caucasus. In post-Soviet Armenia, both the ANM and RPA used their governing status to extend their tenure and manipulate election results. Naturally, the mismanagement of the country's affairs by the two governing parties is likely to create a disinterest in political parties among most voters and a depression of party attachments. Figure 6.2 illustrates the presence of party identification among the Armenian electorate. When asked if respondents *feel close to any particular party*, over two-thirds answered in the negative. Only twenty-nine percent reported feeling close to a political party. The large number of non-partisans is in line with the conventional understanding of party politics and political behavior in Armenia. While both RPA and PAP have relied on their patronal structure to seek out partisan loyalty, both party apparatus lacked the financial resources and the institutional tools of a totalitarian regime to create loyalists among the majority of the people. Thus, while the patronage-seeking behavior of ANM and RPA may have created sub-patrons, loyalists and small group of

supporters, it has also had a second-order effect: a sense of apathy towards politics and a depression of partisan attachments.

Given the low levels of partisanship, how do Armenian partisans distribute themselves along the country's parties? Figure 6.3 divides the twenty-nine percent of Armenian partisans according to their preferred party. Of the 275 respondents who disclosed feeling close to a particular party, seventy-six percent identified with either RPA or PAP. This is hardly surprising because of the nine parties below, the two largest parties, RPA and PAP, maintain patronal networks. The skewness of this distribution not only confirms Armenia's uneven political playing field but also the patronal nature of Armenian party politics.

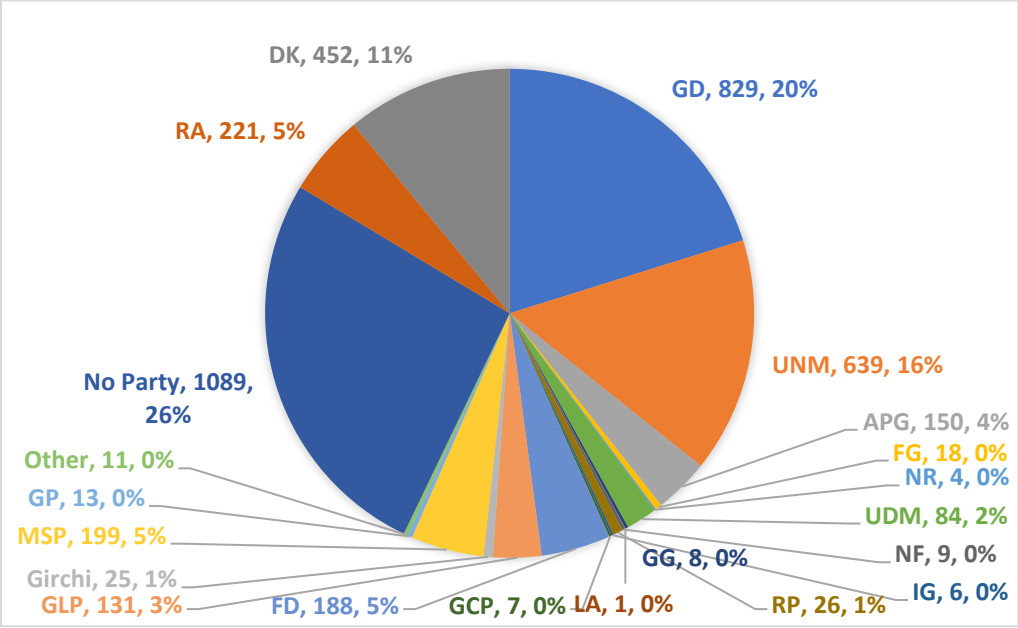
Figure 6.3: Partisanship in Armenia



Compared to party identification in Armenia, the number of partisans in Georgia is considerably larger. What explains such a substantial difference between the two neighboring countries? First, Georgia's party system has always consisted of greater number of political parties than in Armenia. The higher number of parties may translate to an increased number of individuals with psychological attachment to parties. Preliminary support for this claim is based

on the number of parties whose supporters are relatively large in number. In figure 6.4, this includes Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG), United Democratic Movement (UDM), Free Democrats (FD), Georgian Labor Party (GLP), and Movement State for People (MSP).

Figure 6.4: Partisanship in Georgia



Second, the difference may be influenced by the varying questions format between the two surveys. In the 2016 GPAS, NDI asked Georgian voters to disclose their partisanship. However, the method in which the question was asked lacked a standard two-prong test. Instead of considering non-partisan affiliation as a separate question, the 2016 GPAS included non-partisan identity as a response item (labeled 'no party' in Figure 6.4).[116] This difference in the question format may be attributable to the higher percentage of respondents who disclosed being

[116] In a two-prong format, voters are asked whether they identify with a party. This allows voter to initially state they are non-partisan. The 2016 GPAS included non-partisan as an option among political parties Georgian's identify with. This process may have led to the relatively high levels of partisanship in Georgia.

partisan.[117] Of the respondents that did indicate partisan attachments, a plurality of Georgian partisans identified with Georgian Dream followed by the United National Movement. In fact, if we isolate partisan respondents, we find that approximately thirty-five percent identified with Georgian Dream, while twenty-seven percent identified with the United National Movement.

What do the partisan distributions in Figure 6.3 and 6.4 indicate about the Armenian and Georgian electorate? Two brief analyses. First, party politics in both Armenia and Georgia are dominated by a total of four parties and the partisan attachments reported in the figures above confirms this. Although both political arenas contain a de jure multiparty field, both countries operate under a de facto competitive two-party system.[118] Second, of the Armenian respondents surveyed prior to the 2017 election, a plurality relates their partisan attachments to PAP, not the incumbent RPA. However, in the case of Georgia, a plurality of respondents identifies with Georgian Dream. This may be explained by the varying stages of party of power that each party was in. In 2017, RPA was a mature party of power, having been victim to the cost of ruling effect (Rose and Mackie 1983). Georgian Dream, however, is a new party of power whose popularity is relatively high.

Party Identification and Vote Intention

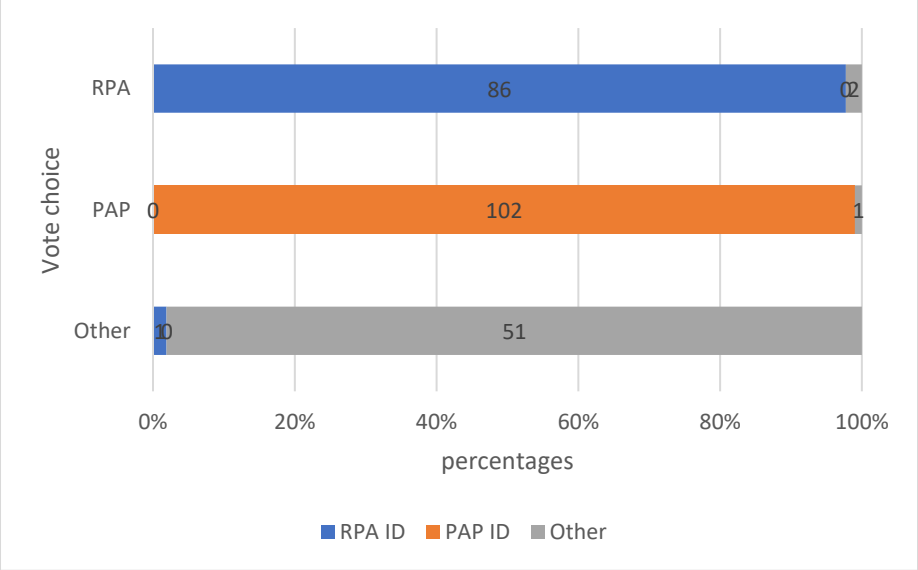
Figures 6.5 and 6.6 plot a bivariate distribution between party identification and vote intention. SPM predicts that the two will align nearly perfectly because one's vote choice is

[117] Recall that while twenty-nine percent of Armenian respondents indicated attachments towards a political party, that statistic for the Georgian sample is almost twice as high.

[118] In the case of Armenia, the de facto two-party system is the result of patronal politics. Both the RPA and PAP are patronal-structured parties controlled by a patron and consisting of sub-patrons. In Georgia, the UNM may not traditionally be considered a political party that relies on a patronal network. However, during its last tenure of governance, UNM's behavior resembled a traditional party of power that relied on a patronal network to support its governing status. Thus, the reasoning behind Armenia's and Georgia's de facto two-party system has more to do with patronal politics than its institutional configuration.

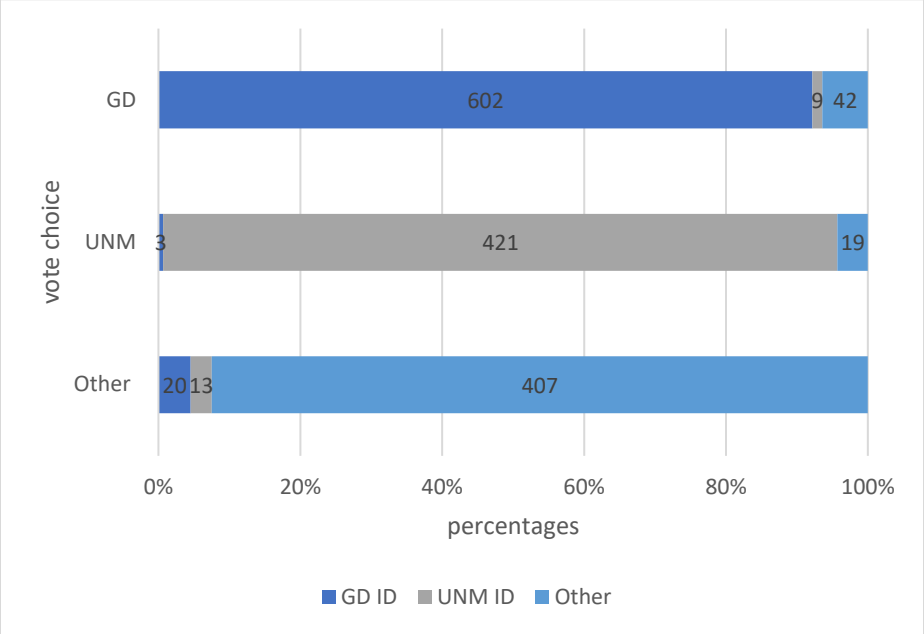
primarily influenced by their party affiliation. The skewed color disribution in the horizontal bars confirms this presumption, suggesting a strong relationship between party identification and incumbent vote intention. In Armenia, a total of ninety-two respondents identified with the incumbent government. Of those, eighty-six, or ninty-three percent of the respondents, intended to vote fo the incumbent party. The salience of partisanship also applies to an opposition party's vote choice. For instance, of the 117 respondents who identified with the PAP, 102 (eighty-seven percent) disclosed a vote for the PAP.

Figure 6.5: Party ID and Vote intention (Armenia)



In Georgia, we find similar results with the skewed distribution of party identification and co-partisan vote choice. Of the 653 respondents who disclosed a vote intention for Georgian Dream, 602 (ninety-two percent) identified with the incumbent party. The bivariate relationship between UNM party affiliation and vote is event higher. Among the 443 respondents who intended to vote for UNM, 421 (ninety-five percent) identified with the incumbent party.

Figure 6.6: Party ID and Vote Intention (Georgia)



Correlation

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 summarize the bivariate relationship between party identification and incumbent vote intention using the Tau-b correlation indicators. The partisanship variable is presented in a dichotomous manner to isolate voters who identify with the incumbent party. Recall that a positive level of association denotes a higher probability of an incumbent vote intention among respondents who identify with the incumbent party. Prior to interpreting the measures of association, it is worth highlighting the varying format of partisan identification questionnaire across the two surveys. As suggested elsewhere, research on the emergence of party identification in the most post-Soviet region contends that the research design of the question impacts the degree of partisanship (Brader and Tucker 2001).

Table 6.1: Partisanship and Incumbent Vote Intention (Armenia)	
Partisanship (RPA = 1, others = 0)	0.7219***

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

Table 6.2: Partisanship and Incumbent Vote Intention (Georgia)	
Partisanship (GD = 1, others = 0)	0.7547***

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

The levels of association in Table 6.1 and 6.2 provide preliminary support for hypotheses H_{7a} and H_{7b}. Among both the Armenian and Georgian sample, the bivariate correlation statistic is positive and statistically significant (***$p \leq .01$). Unexpectedly, the results also point towards a relatively similar level of association between partisanship and incumbent vote intention, despite the different wording of the partisan question between the two samples. Here, we can assume that the question format may not have resulted in large differences in correlation levels across the two samples. Finally, the strong level of association between incumbent partisanship and incumbent vote intention also provide further evidence of the salience of party identification and the vote choice in the Caucasus.

Inferential Results: Armenia

In Table 5.3 of the previous chapter, the results in the baseline trial suggested that Armenian voters were primarily influenced by age and employment status. How then does party identification alter the incumbent vote intention model? Below, we see that the inclusion of RPA partisanship partially alters the previous results. First, the addition of the party identification covariate significantly improves the model. The strength LR Chi-squared statistic is more than ten-fold larger than in the sociological model. In addition, the pseudo R-squared is also significantly higher. Overall, the addition of partisanship to the list of incumbent vote determinants improves its explanatory power.

Table 6.3: Partisanship and the Vote (Armenia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.05 (.03)	-.04 (.03)	-.05 (.04)
Female	.01 (.02)	.004 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Rural	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.04)
Higher Educated	.004 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.004 (.02)
Employed	.04** (.02)	.05** (.02)	.04* (.02)
Top Quartile HH Income	.01 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.01 (.01)
Party Identification	.42*** (.06)	.40*** (.05)	.42*** (.06)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	1,059	1,059	1,059
LR Chi^2	365.14***	379.46***	
Wald Chi^2			915.00***
Pseudo R^2	.44	.45	.44

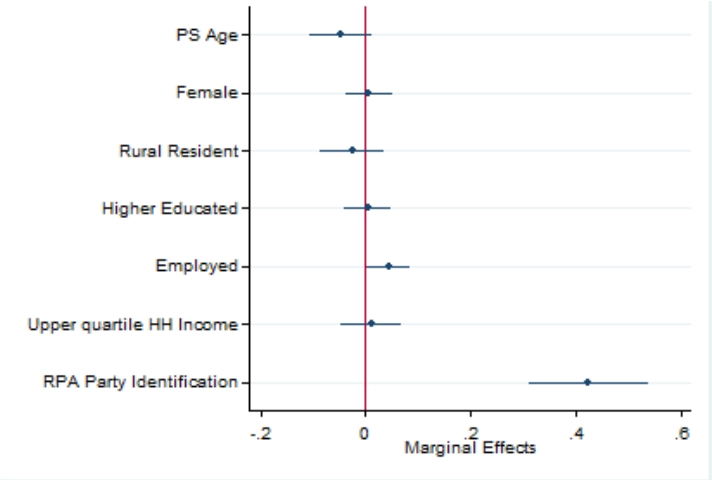
Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Observing the output in the first trial, the size of the party identification coefficient estimate presents a convincing case that RPA party identification is the leading predictor of the incumbent vote. Specifically, one's psychological attachment with the RPA increases their probability of an incumbent vote share by approximately forty-two percentage points. In addition, the inclusion of partisanship changes the direction and levels of statistical significance of the age covariate. Whereas in two of the three trials in the sociological model (see Table 5.3) the age covariate was statistically significant and in the expected direction, the addition of party identification alters the directional relationship between age and incumbent vote intention. More importantly, the relationship between age and incumbent vote share is no longer statistically

significant. Employment status, on the other hand, retains its directional association with the dependent variable, and the relationship remains statistically significant (***$p \leq .01$).[119]

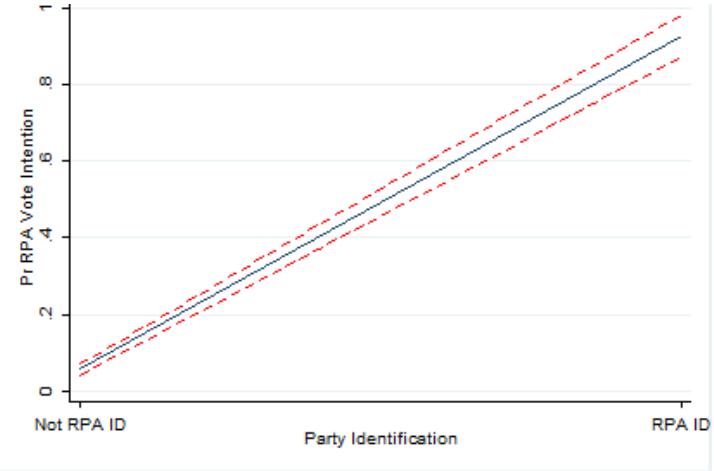
The substantive impact of party identification is evident from the illustration in Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.8. The spatial distance between the employed covariate and RPA partisanship (Figure 6.7) demonstrates the substantive significance of partisanship on incumbent vote intention. This is further illustrated in Figure 6.8 by the forty-five-degree angle of the upward sloping line. Whereas a respondent that does not identify with the RPA maintains a relatively small probability of the RPA vote, having RPA partisanship dramatically increases the probability of an RPA vote.

Figure 6.7: Regression Coefficient Plot (Armenia)



[119] Collinearity issues between sociological covariates and party identification are not present in the output for both Armenia and Georgia. A correlation matrix and a variance inflation factor test do not produce highly correlated results between party identification and sociological variables.

Figure 6.8: Adjusted Predictions



Robustness of Party Identification

To further test the robustness of party identification, I recode the variable to increase response variance. In Table 6.4, partisanship is operationalized as a three-category item. Respondents who disclosed a party identification other than RPA and respondents who did not identify as partisans were coded as '1'; Respondents who claimed to be partisans but failed to choose a particular party, by answering 'don't know' or 'refused to answer', were coded as '2'; Respondents who claimed to be partisans and identified with RPA were coded as '3'. Although the revised operationalization of partisanship does in fact reduce the magnitude of the impact of partisanship, it does not alter the statistical significance of the psychological covariate in any of the three trials. In addition, the revised coding of party identification does not alter the statistically significant (***$p \leq .10$) relationship between employment and incumbent vote intention.

Table 6.4: Robustness of Partisanship and the Vote (Armenia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.04)
Female	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Rural	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)
Higher Educated	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Employed	.04* (.02)	.04** (.02)	.04* (.02)
Top Quartile HH Income	.004 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.004 (.01)
Party Identification[120]	.17*** (.02)	.17*** (.02)	.17*** (.02)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	1,059	1,059	1,059
LR Chi^2	335.22***	348.49***	
Wald Chi^2			999.11***
Pseudo R^2	.40	.42	.40

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Inferential Results: Georgia

Table 6.5 presents the updated incumbent vote function for the Georgian electorate. Recall that the sociological model (See: Table 5.2) found four of the six covariates statistically significant: age, education, employment, and household income. The inclusion of party identification not only increases the explanatory power of the model, but also alters the impact of sociological covariates on the dependent variable. First, we notice significant changes in both the LR Chi-squared statistic and the pseudo R^2 term. The inclusion of partisanship dramatically improves the incumbent vote choice model.

Second, of the seven covariates, incumbent party identification is the leading predictor of the vote for Georgian Dream. Specifically, a respondent who maintains a psychological

[120] Coded as: 1 = no RPA Party ID (those who are not close to any party and those are close to non-RPA parties); 2 = DK/RA; 3 = RPA ID

attachment to Georgian Dream is approximately twenty-six percentage points more likely to vote for the incumbent than a voter who does not identify with Georgian Dream. The magnitude of the coefficient estimate is almost half the size of the estimate found in the Armenian sample, suggesting that the impact of partisanship on the vote choice is much less for the Georgian sample than for the Armenian sample. As suggested earlier, this may be due to the fact that Georgian Dream is a relatively new party while the RPA has been in government since 1999.

Table 6.5: Partisanship and the Vote (Georgia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.02)
Female	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Rural	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.01)
Higher Educated	.01* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.01 (.01)
Employed	-.001 (.01)	.001 (.01)	-.001 (.01)
Top Quartile HH Income	.03* (.01)	.02 (.01)	.03** (.01)
Party Identification	.26*** (.01)	.24*** (.02)	.26*** (.03)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	4,077	4,077	4,077
LR Chi^2	1,972.54***	2,020.04***	
Wald Chi^2			1,742.05***
Pseudo R^2	.54	.55	.54

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Finally, the addition of the party identification covariate alters the impact of employment status and income in two of the three trials; only age remains statistically significant (***$p \leq .01$) across the three trials. Based on the change in the statistical significance of the sociological vote predictors, we can conclude that partisan identification alters the direct relationship between sociological covariate and the vote choice, as predicted by SPM.

Figure 6.9: Regression Coefficient Plot (Georgia)

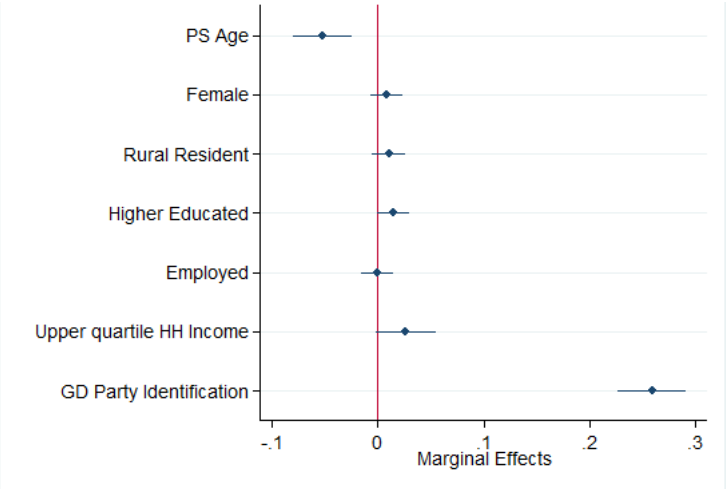
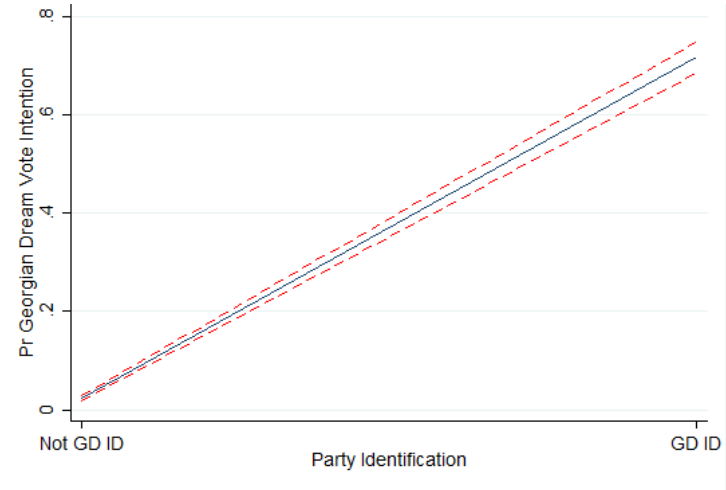


Figure 6.10: Adjusted Predictions



The substantive significance of partisanship is illustrated in Figures 6.9 and 6.10. The spatial difference between income and party identification points to the psychological variable's power in predicting the incumbent vote choice. Similar to the Armenian voter, in Figure 6.10, we witness a forty-five degree upward sloping line that denotes the substantive significance of an incumbent vote intention as we move between voters who do not identify with Georgian Dream

and those who do. The two figures point to a dramatic shift in Georgian Dream support between voters who identify with the incumbent party and those who do not.

Robustness of Party Identification

Table 6.6: Robustness of Partisanship and the Vote (Georgia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.04*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)
Female	.003 (.01)	.0004 (.01)	.003 (.01)
Rural	.01** (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Higher Educated	.01** (.01)	.01** (.01)	.01* (.01)
Employed	.002 (.01)	.002 (.01)	.002 (.01_
Top Quartile HH Income	.03** (.01)	.02* (.01)	.03** (.01)
Party Identification[121]	.12*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)	.12*** (.02)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	4,077	4,077	4,077
LR Chi^2	1,809.98***	1,870.34***	
Wald Chi^2			729.93***
Pseudo R^2	.49	.51	.49

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

The findings in Table 6.6 provide further evidence of the strength of the party identification covariate. Here too, I recode the partisanship variable from a dichotomous structure to a categorical variable ranging between '1' and '3'. The increase in response variance does lessen the size of the coefficient estimate. However, across all three trials, the impact of party identification on the Georgian Dream vote is statistically significant (***$\rho \leq .01$) and in the expected direction. The results below suggest that the Georgian electorate is mainly driven by their partisanship when casting a vote for Georgian Dream. Overall, the party identification

[121] Coded as: 1 = no RPA Party ID (those who are not close to any party and those are close to non-RPA parties); 2 = DK/RA; 3 = RPA ID

covariate performs as expected across all trials. The inclusion of incumbent partisan does influence some sociological indicators, although post-Soviet age, higher education, and household income retain their statistical significance in the hypothesized direction.

Conclusion

An anti-incumbent vote is perhaps the overarching political legacy of the Soviet Union. A one-party state which led to the creation of anti-incumbent sentiment among its residents, the Soviet political system was thought to prolong, even depress, the emergence of party identification. In this chapter, we have witnessed that partisanship is in fact a leading predictor of the vote for the incumbent across both Armenia and Georgia. Although the evidence presented in this chapter furthers SPM's explanatory power of voting behavior in the Caucasus, the findings to create several important implications and grounds for future analysis. For instance, does partisan also act as a leading predictor of the vote for non-incumbent parties? Furthermore, does the relationship between partisanship and vote choice apply to non-competitive parties as well?

Taken together, the descriptive illustrations and inferential analyses point toward heightened loyalty among RPA and Georgian Dream partisans. Then, to what extent are voter perceptions of issues "rationalized" by their party identification? In the next chapter, I address this important empirical question by adding prospective-pocketbook perceptions of the economy to the model. The inclusion of respondent economic attitudes will then allow us to better understand the extent to which partisanship impacts the vote choice.

CHAPTER 7: ECONOMY & THE VOTE

The economy is an issue that concerns both democratically-elected governments and competitive authoritarian leaders alike. This is evidenced by the volume of studies that have assessed the impact of the economy on incumbent electoral fortunes, making economic voting among the largest sub-fields of voting behavior (Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; 2008; 2013). Economic voting posits a dichotomous action of electoral reward and punishment (Key 1966; Lewis-Beck 1990). Since the general wellbeing of the economy is a valence issue, then voters are expected to vote against the incumbent during distressful economic periods but reward them during times of economic prosperity. The reward-punishment dichotomy has been demonstrated across many polities and research suggests that voters orient their economic judgements toward incumbent party (Benton 2005; Duch 2001; Key 1964), thus making the electorate an incumbent-oriented economic voter.

In western liberal democracies, "free" voters periodically engage in economic voting.[122] Reelecting officials or 'throwing the rascals out' for the stewardship of the national economy is a fundamental pillar of electoral accountability. In the Caucasus, "partially free"[123] voters cast ballots within a multiparty electoral environment, but parties of power routinely come out victorious in elections due to their asymmetric access to state resources and manipulation of media and bureaucratic organizations. Thus, elections in Armenia and Georgia are categorized as "often unfree and almost always unfair" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 8).

[122] The constantly changing business cycle creates an inconstant effect of the economy on elections (Singer 2011a; 2011b).

[123] Fumagalli and Turmanidze (2017) refer to the Armenian and Georgian electorate as "partially free voters" in reference to their Freedom House scores. Here I use the phrase "partially free" to refer to the regime type of both Armenia and Georgia. Partially free regimes are synonymous with hybrid regimes (Levisky and Way 2010), a category that applies to both Armenia and Georgia.

If parties of power create "unbalanced" electoral playfields by constantly manipulating the flow of information, then are "partially free" voters able to relate changes in their economic situation to the electoral fortune (or misfortune) of the incumbent? That is, can the Armenian and Georgian electorate base their vote function on prospective-egotropic perceptions of the economy? This is the central question that the following chapter will address. In expanding the vote function of the Armenian and Georgian electorate, I consider whether Armenian and Georgian voters engage in economic voting, despite operating in a manipulated electoral environment. The ability to relate pocketbook trends to support for the government is an important aspect of electoral accountability, particularly in countries where the incumbent makes every attempt to create an uneven playing field.

The rest of the chapter follows a similar path as the preceding three: prior to applying the *troika* of methodological tests (bivariate illustration, tau-b correlation, binary response regression), I discuss the evolution of the post-Soviet economy in Armenia and Georgia, and the impact economic attitudes have had on both groups of voters. At the onset of post-Soviet independence, both countries experienced an unprecedented drop in economic activity and a collapse of the government's role in managing economic affairs. Both countries responded to the crisis by seeking external aid, all the while mismanaging the privatization of industry. This facilitated the rise of patronal politics and further marginalized residents in both countries. Instead of assisting in the transition from a centrally-planned economy to a market-oriented one, the Armenian and Georgian state facilitated the creation an oligarchic economy, through privatization schemes that witnessed the rise of oligarchs who controlled entire industries. The continued mismanagement of economic affairs has thus forced voters emphasize their changes in

their pocketbooks.[124] Here, I find that while Armenians have become more optimistic about their household's relative economic situation, Georgian voters have become more pessimistic.

After a brief discussion of pocketbook perceptions, I test the impact of prospective-egotropic perceptions on the economy on the incumbent vote choice.[125] I start with a bivariate illustration between the covariate of interest and the dependent variable. To test for any traces of party rationalization, I also analyze the relationship between prospective-egotropic perceptions and partisan identification. Next, I analyze the correlation coefficient between economic perceptions and incumbent vote choice. I find a statistically significant and positive directional relationship between the two variables. Finally, I include the covariate of interest in the vote choice regression. I find that prospective-egotropic economic attitudes are a statistically significant predictor of incumbent vote intention in both the Armenian and Georgian electorate. As voter's perceptions of their pocketbook increases they become more likely to vote for the government.

The Economy & The Armenian Electorate

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia's economy experienced an initial downfall followed by a period of recovery. Despite averaging five percent GDP growth rate between 1994 and 1999 (World Bank 2019), the state of economic affairs was dismal due to the unprecedented drop in economic activity between 1991 and 1993. For example, in 1992 alone GDP growth rate contracted by an astonishing forty-two percent (World Bank 2019). The

[124] This is due to the dysconnectivity between the national economic barometer and the pocketbook of the average Armenian or Georgian. The allocation of economic sectors to a handful of oligarchs and their associates created a system where the growth of the economy did not trickle down to the pocketbook of the voter. Thus, sociotropic changes in the economy have limited impact on changes in one's pocketbook.

[125] In this chapter, my analysis of economic perceptions is limited to pocketbook attitudes. This is because of data availability and the fact that pocketbook perceptions of the economy tend to be prevalent in economically less developed societies (Singer and Carlin 2013).

economic crisis was partially triggered by an interstate war with neighboring Azerbaijan and a blockade by neighboring Turkey. To help alleviate the economic distress, the government applied to the International Monetary Foundation (IMF) for a Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) in the amount of forty-four million US Dollars. This was followed by an Extended Credit in the amount of 109 million US Dollars (IMF 2019).[126] In turn, the Fund required Armenia to initiate a multitude of market-friendly policies aimed at lessening the state's presence in the economic arena.

Armenia's neoliberal reforms included steps taken to privatize the state's inherited industries and assets.[127] The process of privatization became a main source of economic malpractice. Armenia's first president, Ter-Petrosyan, initiated patronal policies that saw his family members oversee Armenia's privatization commissions (Hale 2015). Ter-Petrosyan placed his brothers into leadership roles of such commissions. In return, the brothers established methods of privatization that led to the establishment of Armenia's oligarchs and the foundation of Ter-Petrosyan's patronal network. Instead of creating competition amongst businesses and ensuring the proper sale of state assets, the Ter-Petrosyan administration favored political loyalists and members within Ter-Petrosyan's patronal network.

After Ter-Petrosyan's resignation, President Kocharyan (1998 – 2008) continued the patronal framework established by his predecessor. Fortunately, for Kocharyan, his malpractice was overshadowed by Armenia's double-digit economic growth. During his tenure, Kocharyan expanded his patronal network throughout Armenia's businesses (Hale 2015). Instead of reforming the economy and introducing market competition among firms, Kocharyan and

[126] https://www.imf.org/external/np/fin/tad/extarr2.aspx?memberkey1=35&date1Key=2017-02-28
[127] The Armenian government inherited these industries from the Soviet Union.

members of his family and inner circle seized control of sectors including importation of mobile phones, oil imports, and gas stations (Hale 2015). By the end of his presidency, Kocharyan and his family had accumulated stakeholder positions in dozens of Armenian businesses (Hetq 2018).[128]

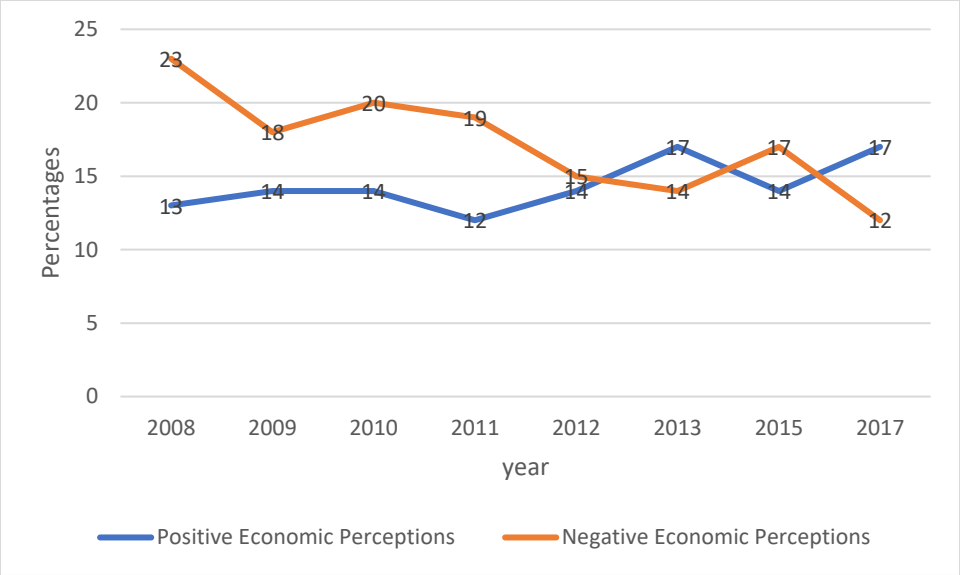
The 2007-9 global financial market impacted Armenia's construction boom and altered its unprecedented economic growth. In 2009, the economy contracted by fourteen percent (World Bank 2019). Total remittances received dropped from almost 2 billion US dollars in 2008 to 1.4 billion in 2009. This drop placed pressure in the valuation of Armenia's currency, the Dram. The country's central bank responded by propping up the Dram. This policy proved disastrous when the bank gave up the practice, which then led to a strong devalue of the Dram on March 3 2009. That day, the Dram lost thirty percent of its value within a few hours (Garbis 2009[129]; Recknagel 2009[130]). Three days later, the government responded by seeking financial assistance from the Fund to the tune of 500 million US Dollars (IMF 2019).

Since the financial fallout from 2008, Armenia's economy has recovered but has yet to return to the double-digit growth rates it witnessed in the 2000s. Today, Armenia maintains a rising information technology sector, which accounts for four percent of its GDP, a number that is comparable to economically advanced countries (Hovhannisyan 2018).[131] Despite this, there exists a duality of economies: a small, high-skilled economy that revolves around young, highly educated Armenians and a large, low-skilled economy that is relies on remittances and tourism. The duality has then led to a furthering of the income gap and wealth disparity. While

[128] https://hetq.am/en/article/92273
[129] https://armenianweekly.com/2009/03/18/finding-common-ground-armenians-cope-with-a-floating-currency-rate/
[130] https://www.rferl.org/a/Armenian_Currency_FreeFalls_As_Central_Bank_Ends_Intervention/1503438.html
[131] https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=35132&lang=3

approximately ten percent of families generate monthly incomes in excess of one-thousand US Dollars, the majority of the population makes upwards to three-hundred US Dollars (ArmES 2017). The widening income gap has also led Armenians to assess economic progression through their pocketbooks.

Figure 7.1: Perceived Relative Pocketbook Conditions in Armenia



How do Armenians perceive their current pocketbook status? Figure 7.1 plots the positive and negative perceptions of households who were asked about their pocketbook conditions "relative to most households around them" (Caucasus Barometer 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2015; 2017). This question differs from a standard egotropic perception questionnaire because of the presence of relativity. Respondents were asked to assess their economic situation relative to others. The results in Figure 7.1 point toward a decreasing trend of negative economic perceptions. For instance, in 2008 twenty-three percent of respondents perceived a negative wellbeing of their pocketbook in relation to others. By 2017, this statistic dropped by more than half. At the other end, positive economic perceptions have gradually risen, though not at the

same rate as negative perceptions have declined. In 2008, thirteen percent of respondents disclosed a negative welling of their pocketbook in relation to others. In 2017, the number slightly increased to seventeen percent.

The Economy & The Georgian Electorate

Georgia's post-Soviet economic path followed a similar trajectory as its western Caucasus neighbor. However, the economic collapse in Georgia was the most severe of all the post-Soviet republics (Jones 2015). In the year following Soviet independence, Georgia's GDP growth rate declined by forty-five percent (World Bank 2019). The mercantilist policies taken by the country's first president, Gamsakhurdia, extended the economic pain as Georgia cut its economic ties with Russia. This action only furthered the decline of trade which dropped by almost sixty percent (Gurgenidze et al. 1994; Jones 2015). Georgia's economic ills were the combination of several factors that, unfortunately, were simultaneously present in the small Caucasus republic. These included: the collapse of trade and production, cut off of all trade with Russia, the eruption of a multidimensional civil war – between the Zviadists and their enemies, and between the Georgian forces and the Abkhaz and South Ossetian nationalists – that led to a period of non-government, and the constant presence of corruption and the black market (Jones 2015).

The Shevardnadze presidency (1994 – 2003) attempted to reroute Georgia towards a prosperous path. Upon taking the presidency, Shevardnadze sought to curbe rising inflation, which reached 160 percent in 1995 (World Bank 2019). This required Georgia to seek IMF assistance and initiate neoliberal economic reforms. Naturally, the market-oriented reforms reduced the government's role in the economy through deregulation and privatization. However, Shevardnadze's economic reforms also brought about decreases in public expenditures, which

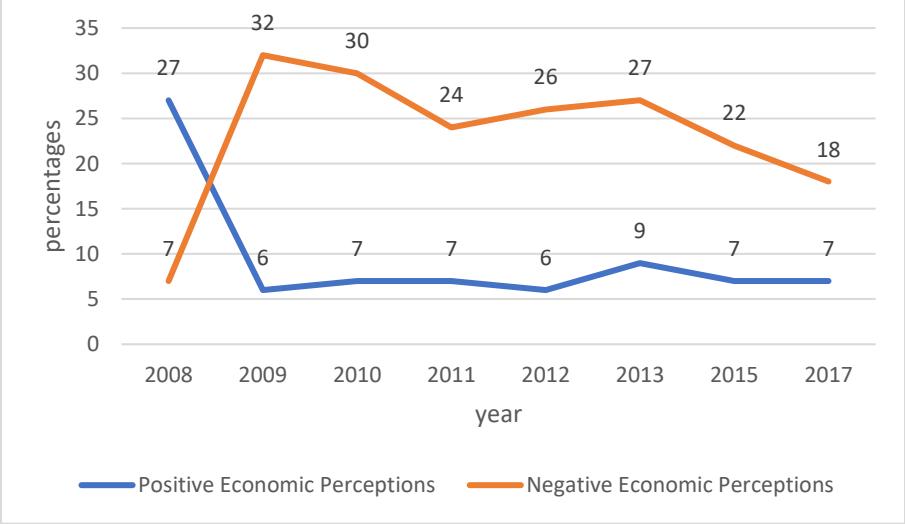
then weakened labor markets and led to a rise unemployment (Jones 2015; World Bank 2019). Shevardnadze's initiation of privatization did not occur under the auspices of the IMF. Instead, Georgia's policy to relinquish the state's ownership of factories and other resources occurred similar to that of Armenia and rest of the region. Preference was given to sub-patrons within Shevardnadze's network, particular members of his extended family (Hale 2015). Thus, despite Shevardnadze's rhetoric to "open" Georgia's economy to the west, Georgia ended up being "monopolized" rather than "marketized" (Jones 2015: 183).

The Saakashvili presidency (2004 – 2012) attempted to steer Georgia's economy off of the patronal path that Shevardnadze geared it toward. Saakashvili's economic reforms involved a two-pronged approach: opening Georgia's markets to western investors and seeking criminal prosecution of entrepreneurs operating the black market. Internally, these policies led to greater compliance, including the government's initiative to increase its revenue collection. For instance, between 2003 and 2008, government revenue from taxes rose from fourteen percent of GDP to twenty-five percent of GDP (Jones 2015). However, the government's notion of Georgian companies flourishing in the global market did not come to fruition. According to Jones (2015), the laissez-faire approach of Saakashvili towards not leveraging local companies to compete with international firms, meant that Georgia's infant industries, left on their own, could not successfully compete with much mature global firms.

The global financial recession halted Georgia's macroeconomic growth as the country went into recession in 2009. Until his last years in office, Saakashvili's economic agenda lacked a comprehensive policy towards social welfare. The government's pursuit opening Georgia to the West and riding the country of corruption failed to resonate with voters, who increasingly became hostile of Saakashvili and UNM, and shifted their support towards Georgian Dream.

Georgia's new party of power emphasized the role of social welfare and the pocketbook of the Georgian voter. The new government's economic policy involved a economic détente with Russia and a nation-wide promise to create jobs. Although relations with Russia are still limited in terms of trade, Georgian Dream has managed to lower the unemployment rate from twenty-percent in 2012 to just under fourteen percent in fourteen percent in 2017. That said, access to employment continues to be the single most important issue for the Georgian electorate (GPAS 2016).

Figure 7.2: Perceived Relative Pocketbook Conditions in Georgia



The salience of employment opportunities among the Georgian population points toward an electorate that primes pocketbook measures of the economy. In Figure 7.2, I trace the pocketbook conditions of Georgian voters relative to their fellow citizens. Here, we witness the impact that the global financial recession had on Georgian voters. From 2008 to 2009, negative pocketbook perceptions increased by twenty-five percent, while positive perceptions decreased by twenty-one percent. Since then, Georgian voters have maintained a net negative perception

index. However, since the incumbency of Georgian Dream negative perceptions have decreased from twenty-seven percent to eighteen percent, but positive perceptions have remained flat.

Compared Figures 7.1 and 7.2, we find that Armenians are generally more optimistic about their relative economic situations than are Georgians. We also witness that the impact of the great financial recession was largely in Georgia than in Armenia, as evidence by the rise of negative perceptions in the former country. Finally, the percent of Armenians with positive pocketbook perceptions has gradually increased, while in Georgia this statistic has remained flat. In sum, the figures above portray a greater sense of economic insecurity among the Georgian electorate than the Armenian. In the next section, I expand pocketbook analysis and assess how both groups consider changes in their household's future economic status.

Bivariate Analysis

The 2017 ArmES asked respondents, "*what are your expectations regarding the economic situation of your household for the next twelve months?"* Figure 7.3 illustrates the distribution of responses among the 1,062 respondents. A plurality of respondents (480, or forty-five percent of respondents) provided a neutral answer claiming that they expect their household's economic situation to remain the same through 2018. This was followed by an optimistic claim (289, or twenty-seven percent of respondents) that their household's economic situation *will improve somewhat.* Some 139 respondents (or thirteen percent of respondents) disclosed a pessimistic perception of their prospective-egotropic wellbeing, predicting that their household's economic situation *will worsen somewhat*. Overall, the distribution of responses points toward an electorate that is relatively optimistic about their household's future economic situation.

Figure 7.3: Economic Perceptions in Armenia

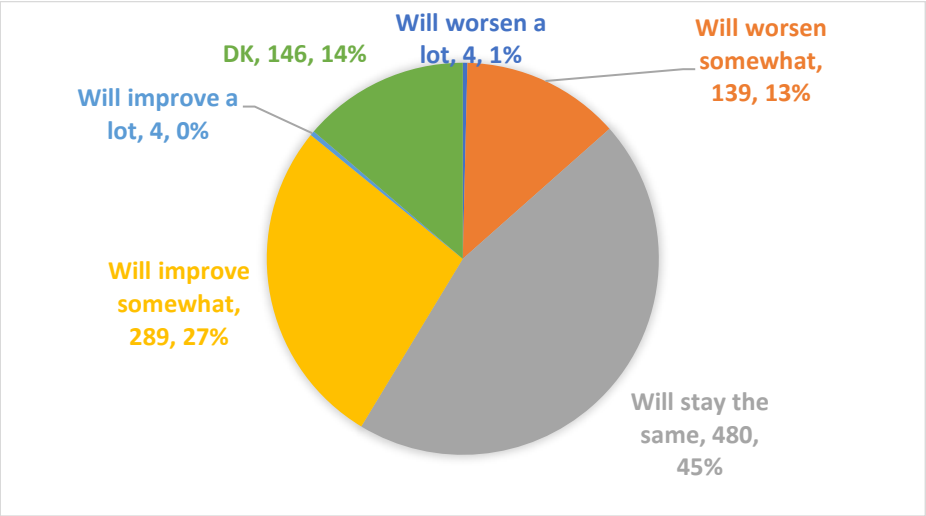
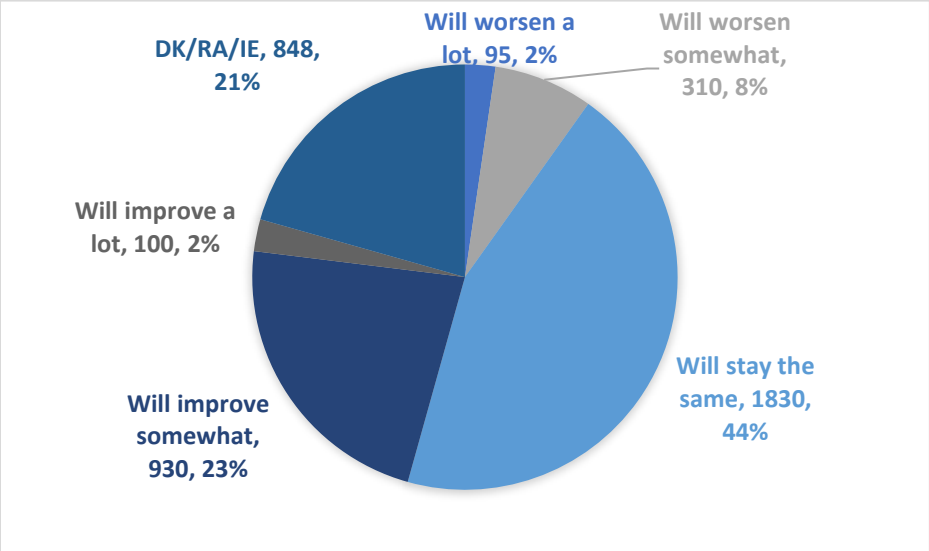


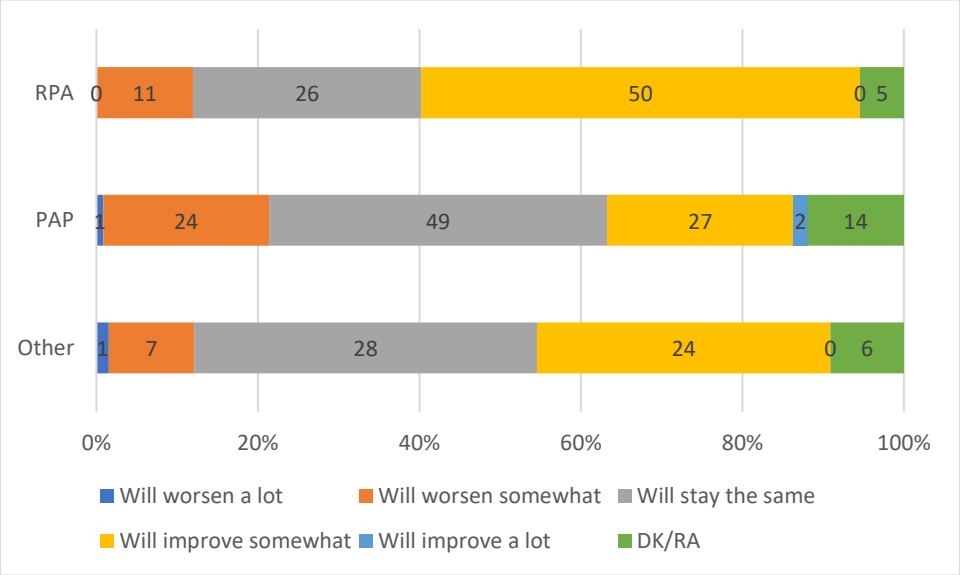
Figure 7.4: Economic Perceptions in Georgia



In Georgia, we find a similar trend with voters optimistic about their household's economic future. Although the respondent sample size is larger, a plurality of Georgian residents (1,830, or forty-four percent) also disclosed a neutral response when asked about their prospective-egotropic perceptions of the economy. This was followed by some 930 respondents

(or twenty-three percent) who claimed that their household's future economic situation *will improve somewhat.* Only 310 respondents (eight percent) claimed that their situation *will worsen somewhat*, while an even small number of ninety-five respondents (two percent) mentioned their household's financial situation *will worsen a lot*. Thus, Georgian voters appear equally optimistic as Armenian voters, but are less pessimistic about their household's economic future.

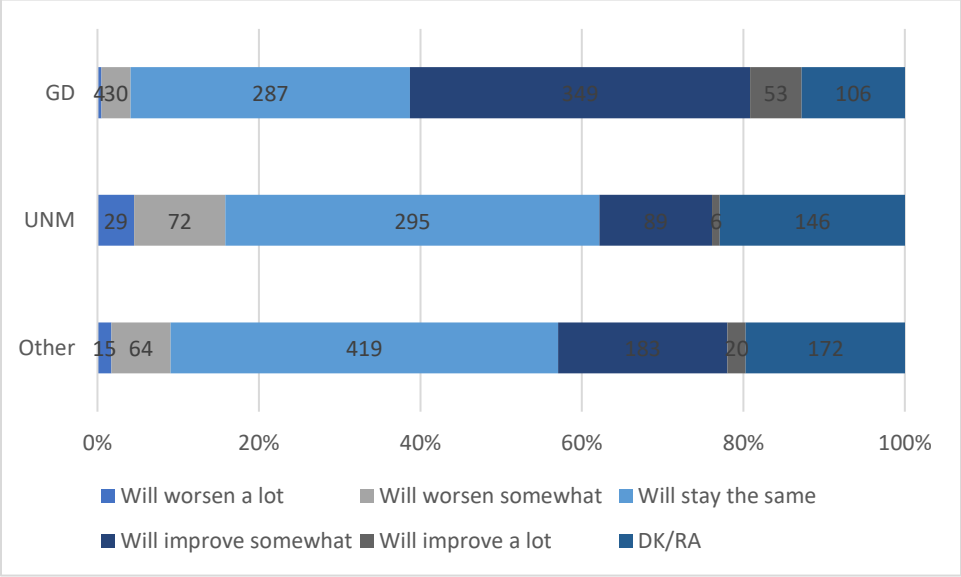
Figure 7.5: Economic Perceptions by Partisanship (Armenia)



Given the distribution of responses above, to what extent are voter economic perceptions being influence by partisan identification? Recall that the authors of SPM claimed the presence of partisan rationalization among the voting public (see: Campbell et al. 1960). To test the relationship between party identification and economic perceptions, Figures 7.5 and 7.6 plot the distribution of prospective-egotropic perceptions across partisanship. Here, we witness that the majority of RPA partisans perceived a positive shift in their future economic wellbeing. Fifty-four percent of RPA partisans noted that their household's economic situation would 'improve somewhat' in the future. In addition, economic pessimism was lowest among RPA supporters,

with twelve percent of RPA partisans noting that their economic situation will turn for the worse. When analyzing PAP partisans, we find that their level of optimism is the lowest among the group with twenty-four percent of respondents disclosing that their economic situation would 'improve somewhat'. Thus, the bivariate illustration provides some evidence of partisan rationalization among Armenian voters.[132]

Figure 7.6: Economic Perceptions by Partisanship (Georgia)



In Georgia, we find a similar trend between positive perceptions of the economy among Georgian Dream partisans. In fact, forty-two percent of individuals who identify with Georgian Dream perceived that their household's future economic status 'will improve somewhat'. Not surprisingly, the lowest percent of optimism is recorded among UNM supporters. Here, only fourteen percent considered their future economic status as 'improve somewhat'. In all, we find

[132] The bivariate relationship does not test for causality. That is, the illustration does not support the notion the partisan identification causes greater or less economic optimism. It does however, point toward a relationship between the two variables.

that both Armenian and Georgian voters who identify with the incumbent party are more likely to possess a positive economic outlook than voters who identify with the main opposition party.

Figure 7.7: Economic Perceptions and Vote Preference (Armenia)

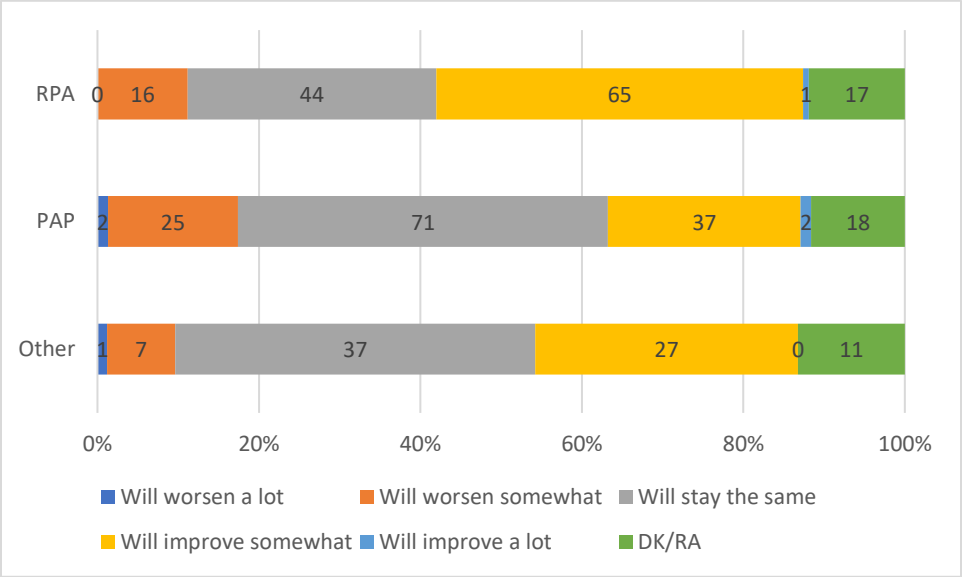
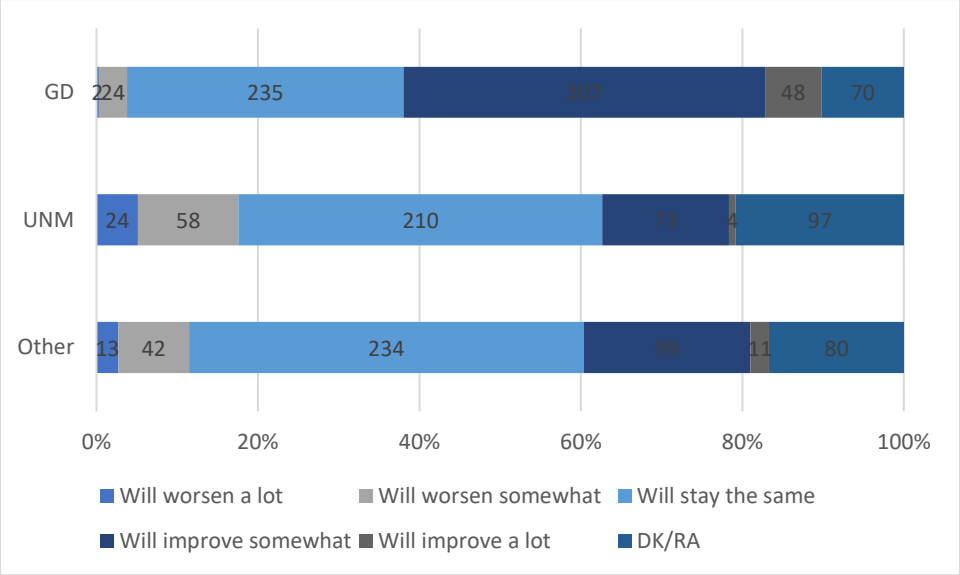


Figure 7.8: Economic Perceptions and Vote Preference (Georgia)



Given a relationship between economic perceptions and partisanship, do Armenian and Georgian voters relate their economics perceptions with vote choice? Figures 7.7 and 7.8 provide evidence towards the claim that voters in the Caucasus associate positive economic wellbeing with incumbent vote intention. In Figure 7.7, we find that forty-five percent of RPA supporters mentioned that their household's economic situation would 'improve somewhat'. Among PAP voters, the percentage of a positive economic look registers the lower at only twenty-five percent. In Figure 7.8, we find a similar trend with Georgian voters. Among Georgian Dream voters, forty-five percent disclosed "somewhat" improvement in their household's economic future. The lowest percentage of positive economic perception was registered among UNM voters, sixteen percent of whom reported "somewhat" of an improvement. The illustrative results in the figures below furthers the two hypotheses laid out in Chapter 2: that positive perceptions of the economy will be associated with increased incumbent vote intention.

Correlation

Before shifting our attention to the multivariate analysis, I briefly discuss the bivariate correlation between prospective-egotropic perceptions of the economy and incumbent vote intention. Table 7.1 and 7.2 report the tau-b correlation coefficient for the Armenian and Georgian electorate. Here, a positive relationship suggests that an increase in economic wellbeing is associated with higher vote intention for the incumbent. The output below points toward a positive, statically significant (***$p \leq .01$) relationship between the "economy" covariate and the dependent variable. This is in line with the two hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2. When we explore the relationship further, we find that the tau-b measurement for the Armenian sample (0.1323) is almost half the size of the Georgian sample (0.2564). The difference not only suggests that the bivariate relationship between economic attitudes and

incumbent vote intention is stronger among the Georgian electorate than the Armenian electorate but may hint at a similar output in the multivariate results below.

Table 7.1: Economic Perceptions and RPA Vote Intention	
Prospective-Egotropic Attitudes	0.1323***

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

Table 7.2: Economic Perceptions and Georgian Dream Vote Intention	
Prospective-Egotropic Attitudes	0.2564***

Note: ***$p \leq .01$; p **$\leq .05$; p *$\leq .10$

How does the output above relate to tau-b measures in previous chapters? At first glance, it is clear that the correlation levels are nowhere near the magnitude of partisan identification and the vote. Recall that the correlation levels between the latter two variables were 0.7219 and 0.7547, respectively. In comparison, the tau-b measures for economic attitudes are a fraction of party identification output. Beyond the psychological variable, we find that the statistics above perform quite well in relation to the six sociological variables: age, sex, residence, education, employment, and income. In none of the six preceding variables, do we find the tau-b statistic greater than the output above. This may point us toward a similar hierarchy in the multivariate analysis. That is, the strength of the bivariate relationship may be a heuristic of how each covariate will perform in the Tables and Figures below. Thus, I expect the incumbent vote choice to be influenced by partisanship and economic perceptions, above all. To test this, we shift our attention to the section below.

Inferential Results: Armenia

The regression output with the inclusion of the "economy" covariate is found in Table 7.3. In the case of the Armenian electorate, a positive change in the prospective-egotropic perception of the economy is associated with a higher probability for an RPA vote by

approximately three percentage points. Armenians who perceive a positive change in their household's economic situation in the next twelve months are more likely to support RPA than those who perceive negative or no change in their prospective-egotropic economic attitudes. The statistical significance of the economy covariate suggests that its effect on the incumbent vote intention is independent of party identification.

Table 7.3: Economy and the Vote (Armenia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.06* (.03)	-.05* (.03)	-.06* (.03)
Female	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Rural	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.04)
Higher Educated	.004 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.004 (.02)
Employed	.04** (.02)	.04** (.02)	.04* (.02)
Top Quartile HH Income	.004 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.004 (.01)
Party Identification	.41*** (.06)	.39*** (.06)	.41*** (.06)
Economy	.03** (.01)	.03* (.02)	.03** (.01)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	1,059	1,059	1,059
LR Chi^2	369.36***	382.90***	
Wald Chi^2			1,247.49***
Pseudo R^2	.44	.46	.44

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

How does the addition of the "economy" variable impact other covariates and the overall model? In Table 7.3, we notice that its addition changes the relationship between one sociological variable and the vote. Recall that in Chapter 6, inclusion of party identification led the age covariate to lose its statistical significance. Here, we witness that the age covariate has regained its significant relationship with RPA vote intention. Beyond age, the statistical significance and magnitude of other variables remain unchanged. The addition of the "economy'

covariate also improves the predictability of the model as evidenced by the LR Chi-squared and the Pseudo R-squared statistic across the first two trials.

The next two figures, Figure 7.9 and 7.10, illustrate the substantive significance of the "economy" covariate. Figure 7.9 presents the regression coefficients in a plot format, which allows us to compare the spatial distance of the marginal effects. From the figure below, it is clear that the Armenian voter is predominately influenced by party identification with pocketbook perceptions registered a marginal impact on the vote. Figure 7.10 distribution the probability of an RPA vote across the five types of pocketbook wellbeing response items. According to economic voting theory, we expect to witness a linear, upward sloping line suggesting a greater probability of an incumbent vote at each 'higher' level of wellbeing. As expected, the illustration in Figure 7.11 encompasses a linear line and narrow confidence intervals around the center. This is due to the large number of respondents who reported either no changes in their economic situation or "somewhat" changes (in either direction) in their pocketbook perceptions.

Figure 7.9: Regression Coefficient Plot (Armenia)

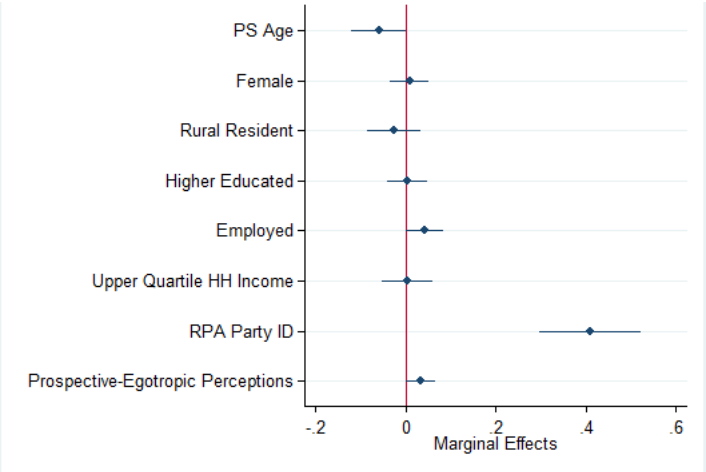
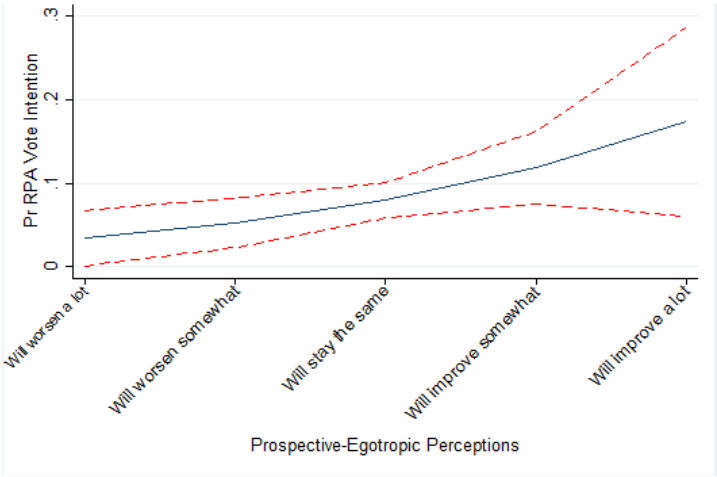


Figure 7.10: Adjusted Predictions



The output in this section comprises the three blocks of the funnel-of-causality and can be interpreted as the final incumbent vote choice model for the Armenian electorate. With the final vote choice model presented in Table 7.3, what type of an empirical image do the results suggest? First, we find that RPA party identification is, by far, the leading predictor of the vote for the incumbent. The difference in the magnitude of the party identification coefficient with the rest of the covariates is quite large (see Figure 7.9).

Second, Armenian voters are also economic voters. Two of the four statistically significant covariates, employment and prospective-egotropic economic attitudes, are driving the vote for the RPA. In fact, the magnitude of the employment statistic (.04) surpasses that of the prospective-egotropic coefficient estimate (.03). The impact of the economy on the incumbent vote function is hardly surprising. In both the 2017 and 2018 ArmES study, the overwhelming majority of Armenians disclosed "jobs" as the most important issue facing the country. Furthermore, as outlined in the section above, Armenia's widening income gap and the rise of a highly-skilled, IT-driven middle class has led to employment becoming more lucrative and

demanding. All this point toward an Armenian electorate whose electoral judgements are influenced by their personal economic motives.

Finally, youth is also a significant predictor of the vote, although its impact is not as constant across the twelve trials introduced in this study. This is perhaps the most foretelling result as the 2018 velvet revolution was largely orchestrated and led by youth movements. The "*take a step, reject Serzh"* and *"take a step, reject RPA*" slogans were at the foundation of youth protestors. In fact, the youth movement was the most active and idealistic among Pashinyan's coalition groups. From blocking subway carts from leaving their stops to shutting down Armenia's higher education system, by having systemic walkouts from class, Armenia's youth, similar to Georgia's *Kmara* movement, was instrumental in bringing about the end of the Sargsyan regime and the RPA.

Inferential Results: Georgia

Next, we shift out attention to the Georgian electorate. The results with addition of prospective-egotropic perceptions are presented in Table 7.4. For Georgian voters, an increase in their prospective-egotropic wellbeing is associated with a three-percentage point increase in the vote for Georgian Dream. This is constant across all three trials. Beyond the statistically significant relationship (***$p \leq .01$), we find that the addition of the "economy" covariate alters the impact of other variables. Specifically, the addition of prospective-egotropic perceptions shifts the relationship between education and incumbent vote intention. That relationship is no longer significant. The inclusion of the economy covariate also impacts the level of significance between income and vote intention in the baseline model. In the previous chapter, the relationship between income and vote intention was significant at the [$p \leq .05$] level. However, with the addition of the economy covariate the significance drops down to [$p \leq .10$].

Table 7.4: Economy and the Vote (Georgia)			
	(I)	(II)	(III)
PS Age	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.02)
Female	.01 (.01)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Rural	.004 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	.004 (.01)
Higher Educated	.01 (.01)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.01)
Employed	-.004 (.01)	-.003 (.01)	-.004 (.01)
Top Quartile HH Income	.03* (.01)	.02 (.01)	.03** (.01)
Party Identification	.24*** (.02)	.23*** (.02)	.24*** (.03)
Economy	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)
Region FE	No	Yes	No
Clustered SE	No	No	Yes
Obs.	4,077	4,077	4,077
LR Chi^2	2,008.66***	2,053.47***	
Wald Chi^2			8,805.78***
Pseudo R^2	.55	.56	.55

Note: Dependent variable is incumbent vote intention. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

The results in Table 7.4 can be interpreted as the full incumbent vote choice model for the Georgian electorate. The findings suggest that Georgian voters rely on a mixture of sociological and psychological variables when assessing the electoral performance of the incumbent. Although both sociological and psychological factors influence the incumbent vote choice, the magnitude of the coefficient estimates illustrates a hierarchy of voting impact. First, party identification has the largest impact on the vote choice with an estimated twenty-four percentage point increase in the vote for Georgian Dream among the portion of the electorate who identifies with the party of power. Second, we find that the impact of being born after the fall of the Soviet Union negatively impacts the vote for Georgian Dream by approximately five percentage points. Third, we find a three-percentage point increase in voting for Georgian Dream among voters who perceive a prospective positive change in their household's economic

wellbeing. Finally, voters who are in the top quartile income bracket are more three percentage points more likely to vote for Georgian Dream, although the significance of this relationship is not constant across the three trials. All this suggests that the Georgian incumbent vote choice is influenced by party identification, the economy, and post-Soviet age.

Figure 7.11: Regression Coefficient Plot (Georgia)

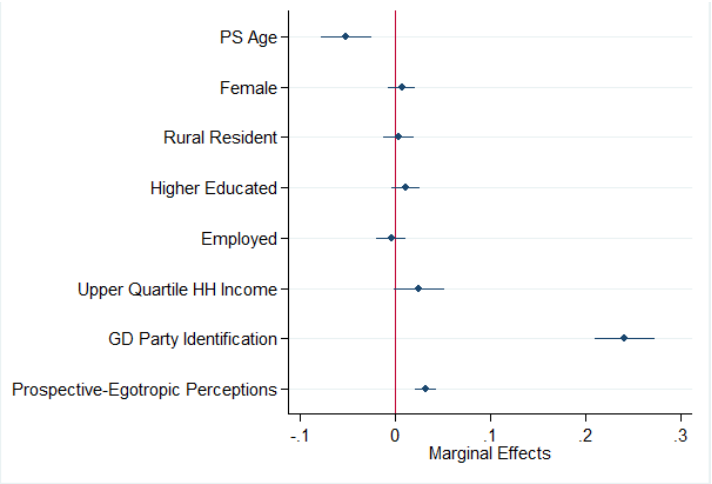
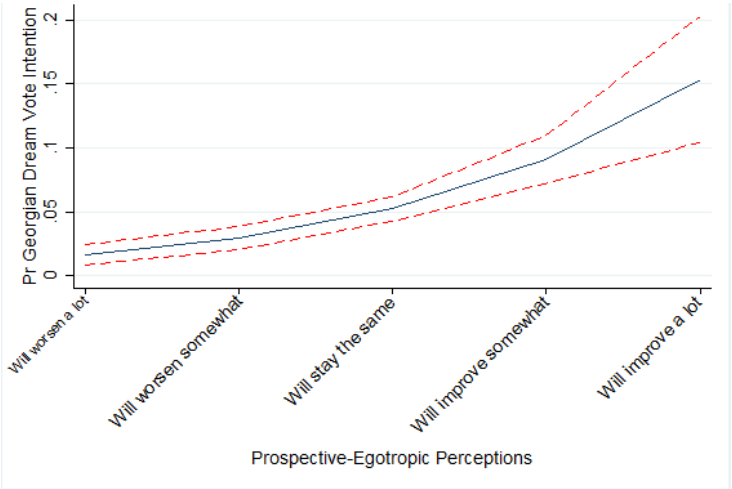


Figure 7.12: Adjusted Predictions



Beyond statistical significance, what is the substantive impact each covariate in the model above? In Figure 7.11 and 7.12, I illustrate the substantive significance of the vote choice

model for the Georgian electorate. Below, we notice that the substantive significance of prospective-egotropic economic perceptions is quote limited, when taking the impact of party identification in account. The spatial distance between Georgian Dream partisanship and the "economy" covariate points to an electorate whose vote function is almost entirely consumed by partisanship. In Figure 7.12, we the linear, upward sloping line points to increased probability for Georgian Dream as we move up each level of economic wellbeing. Despite this expected relationship, its impact on the probability for a Georgian Dream vote is quote limited. All this points to the fact that while economic measures drive the Georgian electorate (economic perceptions and income), they dwarf in comparison to partisanship.

Conclusion

This chapter tested the impact of economic perceptions on incumbent vote intention. Considered a salient issue within the vote function, the economy's role in electoral outcomes has been extensively studied elsewhere. In Armenia and Georgia, the sudden decline in the standard of living, following the collapse of the USSR, paved the way for economic concerns to be the core foundation of how Armenians and Georgians prioritize the role of issues in their vote calculus. The saliency given to jobs, the widening income gap, and the primacy of pocketbook concerns made egotropic perceptions a natural proxy of the economic vote.

The addition of economic attitudes into the voting choice led to the completion of the model and to the following two conclusions. First, the economy maintains an independent impact on the vote for the Armenian and Georgian electorate. Although within both groups of voters, those who identify with the incumbent tend to have higher percentages of an optimistic economic outlook, the multivariate results suggest that prospective-egotropic attitudes independently influence the incumbent vote intention. This is an important finding for works that advocate for

the presence of economic voting. The ever-expanding literature now includes two new cases studies furthering its universal reach.

Second, the economic impact on the vote appears to be identical for the Armenian and Georgian electorate. Comparing Figure 7.10 and 7.11 we find a similar linear pattern of increased economic wellbeing and higher probability of incumbent vote intention. It is important to note the relationship maintains its linear path across the five-categories of economic wellbeing. This points to actual differences in how voters in the Caucasus evaluate the incumbent based on the specific type of economic perception they possess.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I expand on the behavioral traits of the Armenian and Georgian voter and discuss the extent to which SPM accurately predicted the vote calculus of each electorate.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

What is the value of voting behavior analyses in the post-Soviet space? Historically, "taking partly free voters seriously"[133] was often overlooked by scholars because of the limited "fruits" of such research. In competitive authoritarian regimes, where elections become political theatre for the incumbent to extend its rule, the will of the voters is of second-order importance, and often does not correspond to election results. Further academic neglect is due to the validity of electoral results, which compromises the ability to conduct aggregate-based research. However, the institutional "window-dressing" and the uneven playfield in electoral settings, should not drive away curious minds. Instead, it should refocus attention towards the behavioral traits of post-Soviet voters themselves. What sort of components impact the decision to vote? Which type of indicators influence the vote choice? Are voters driven by sociological or psychological vote determinants? How does party volatility impact political socialization? These are only a handful of questions that that yet to be addressed.

The preceding four chapters attempted to fill the void and provide insight into post-Soviet voter behavior through a study of the electorate in the Caucasus. This region consists of two competitive authoritarian regimes that provide voters with the opportunity to cast ballots in reoccurring, uninterrupted elections. The Armenian and Georgian electorate routinely participate in multiparty elections, but the competitive nature of such elections is almost always skewed in favor of the party of power. This creates a disequilibrium between the will of the voters and the final aggregate election results. Furthermore, it complicates the process of partisan development and party identification because both regimes are categorized by large party volatility and parties

[133] A reference (and homage) to Fumagalli and Turmanidze (2017) for their endeavor in voting practices among the Armenian and Georgian electorate.

are not structured along ideological lines. If the emergence of the two "anchor" variables (party identification and ideology) is complicates, does SPM apply to voting behavior in Armenia and Georgia?

In this dissertation, I set out to model the post-Soviet voter through a western-based theory of voting behavior. Each chapter tested the applicability of SPM with two groups of voters in the Caucasus. The results point toward an electorate whose behavioral traits are commensurate with SPM. Despite the infancy of multiparty elections in the region; Despite Armenia's and Georgia's infant party system; And, despite reoccurring elections that are not necessarily free or fair, voters in the Caucasus base their electoral judgements on a combination of political and economic considerations. However, it would be premature to conclude this dissertation with the following: that voting behavior traits of Armenian and Georgian voters mirror the political behavior in western liberal democracies. The similarities observed in this dissertation should not overshadow the differences that exist between the post-Soviet electorate and their counterparts in the West.

The rest of the concluding chapter proceeds in the following order: The first section summarizes the behavioral traits of the Armenian and Georgian voter and provides a comparative analysis of both electorate groups. The second section applies the findings of both groups to the wider post-Soviet region. The central role of parties of power not only creates incumbent-centric voters in Armenia and Georgia but also throughout much of the post-Soviet republics. In the final section, I propose avenues of future research that can help expand our understanding of the post-Soviet voter. Specifically, I call for future works to analyze the emergence of party identification in the region and the process by which individuals become political socialized. From previous works, we find that the patronal nature of politics and the lack

of institutional autonomy in the post-Soviet region "personalizes" political participation. How does this personalization effect then impact the development of party identification and party rationalization? I conclude the chapter and the dissertation by suggesting two paths of partisan development in the post-Soviet region.

Voters in the Caucasus

At the onset of independence, Armenia and Georgia followed a similar path of political development and economic reform. Both countries witnessed an initial party of power that was short-lived due to internal political instability. In addition, both countries undertook neoliberal economic reforms to ease the pressure of unstable macroeconomic indicators. However, the evolution of parties of power was quite different in Georgia than in Armenia. The reoccurring internal instability of the former country resulted in shorter periods of incumbent rule. In contrast, the RPA in Armenia ruled for almost two decades. Ultimately, the RPA was brought down in a similar, non-violent manner as the CUG in 2003.

The above description should predict similar sociological traits between Armenian and Georgian voters. The rise of parties of power, the mismanagement of economic reform and the competitive authoritarian nature of both regimes will result in voting behavioral traits that emphasize youth and income disparity. Fortunately, the vote function of Armenian and Georgian voters is relatable to the context of post-Soviet political and economic development. Young voters in both countries display behavioral traits that are antithetical towards incumbent support. In fact, the magnitude of the impact is nearly identical (see: Table 7.3 and 7.4) across the two regimes. Why are younger voters less supportive of the incumbent? The answer to this question is found in the historical analysis of the rose revolution and the velvet revolution. In both cases,

youth protest was due to corruption, electoral fraud, politicization of the education system and an overall lack of opportunities in the country.

Beyond youthfulness, we find that socioeconomic factors also impact the vote, albeit with varying indicators. In Armenia, voters who are employed are more likely to intend to vote for the RPA. Thus, employment translates to a positive referendum on the incumbent. In Georgia, voters who are in the top quartile of the household income bracket are more likely to support Georgian Dream. At first, the varying socioeconomic indicators may point to contrasting behavioral traits among the two groups. However, we can consider employment status and household income to be proxies of monetary resources. In both Armenia and Georgia, where social welfare is quite limited and where retirement pensions are a fraction of the median household income, access to monetary resources are a salient factor towards judging the incumbent. Thus, both groups of voters relate their access to monetary resources with incumbent support.

Moving toward psychological factors, we find that voters in the Caucasus rely on party identification when casting a vote for the government. In both Armenia and Georgia, incumbent partisanship is, by far, the largest predictor of incumbent vote choice. How does this finding relate to SPM and the overall polity in both countries? Recall that the party system in Armenia and Georgia is defined by a high level of party volatility. However, this is often limited to non-incumbent parties. That is, parties of power often survive for decades on end. For example, the RPA has been in existence for almost three decades, while Georgian Dream has existed for almost a decade. Surely, if partisanship is to exist in Armenia and Georgia, it will most likely to exist among voters who identify with the party of power. Thus, the fact that incumbent vote intention is driven by partisanship is not all that surprising when considering the political maturity both parties. Finally, the association between incumbent partisanship and vote intention

is commensurate with SPM, and the finding strengthens the applicability of SPM in the Caucasus.

Another psychological force that both Armenian and Georgian voters rely on is their perception of the economy. Here we find that voters in the Caucasus are driven by prospective and egotropic economic attitudes. The prevalence of pocketbook perceptions not only corresponds to the income-based socioeconomic traits mentioned earlier, but also to evidence suggesting lower income voters emphasize pocketbook attitudes (Singer and Carlin 2013). Why are voters in the Caucasus priming pocketbook perceptions of the economy? One reason may be the dysconnectivity between macroeconomic perceptions indicators and the socioeconomic status of much of the people. As discussed earlier, the wealth gap may trigger the prevalence of pocketbook attitudes since both Armenia and Georgia have struggled with median income growths since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Table 8.1: Confirmation of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Armenia	Georgia
H_1: Young voters are less likely to vote for the incumbent.	**Confirmed**	**Confirmed**
H_2: Female voters are less likely to vote for the incumbent.	Rejected	Rejected
H_3: Rural voters are more likely to vote for the incumbent.	Rejected	Rejected
H_4: College educated voters are less likely to vote for the incumbent.	Rejected	Rejected
H_5: Employed voters are more likely to vote for the incumbent.	**Confirmed**	Rejected
H_6: Voters whose household income is in the top quartile bracket are more likely to vote for the incumbent.	Rejected	**Confirmed**
H_7: Voters who identify with the incumbent party are more likely to vote for the incumbent.	**Confirmed**	**Confirmed**
H_8: Voters who perceive a positive change in their prospective-egotropic economic perception are more likely to vote for the incumbent.	**Confirmed**	**Confirmed**

Voters in the post-Soviet Space

Can the vote functions of Armenian and Georgian electorate apply to voters in the rest of the post-Soviet region? A preliminary observation points toward the ability to generalize what

we have learned about the Armenian and Georgian voter to the rest of the region. This is due to the similar nature of politics and parties across the region. According to Hale (2015) political relations in the post-Soviet space takes the form of patronalism. In addition, according to Levitsky and Way (2010), the post-Soviet region consists of stable competitive authoritarian regimes, unstable competitive authoritarian regimes, and full authoritarian regimes. The difference between the first two and the latter is the degree to which the party of power allows the opposition to contest the position of the executive (Levitsky and Way 2010: 23). The full authoritarian regime in Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan may fully prevent the development of partisan identity among opposition groups but the system does allow the sustainability of incumbent-oriented partisanship, since parties of power in full authoritarian regimes tend to have similar levels of existence as their counterparts in competitive authoritarian regimes. Thus, we expect partisanship to be the driver of the vote in Armenia as well as in Azerbaijan or Kyrgyzstan. This is because in the latter regimes, the only type of partisan identification that can emergence and flourish is an incumbent-based one.

Besides partisanship, can voters in the rest of the post-Soviet space rely on sociological groups and perceptions of the economy? The wave of counter-incumbent protests may suggest that voters in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and the rest of the region have similar sociological behavioral traits. In the region, the youth has been the most vocal opposition of the government, leading protests against civil liberty abuses in Azerbaijan, orchestrating the Maidan movement in Ukraine, and Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan. The dissatisfaction with the incumbent among the region's youth is due to similar concerns: prevalence of corruption, mismanagement of the economy, and lack of opportunities. Thus, a cross-national study of the

post-Soviet voting behavior may disclose the same result as in the Caucasus: that post-Soviet voters are less likely to vote for the incumbent.

Regarding the prevalence of socioeconomic factors, the region's experience with economic restructuring towards capitalism brought about similar results of increased income inequality. Throughout much of the post-Soviet space, this remains to be unresolved and wealth in the region is tied to acceptance of the regime. That is, anti-government businesses and wealthy individuals are quite rare in the region. Thus, we can assume that one's employment status or location in the income bracket may relate to their satisfaction and approval of the government.

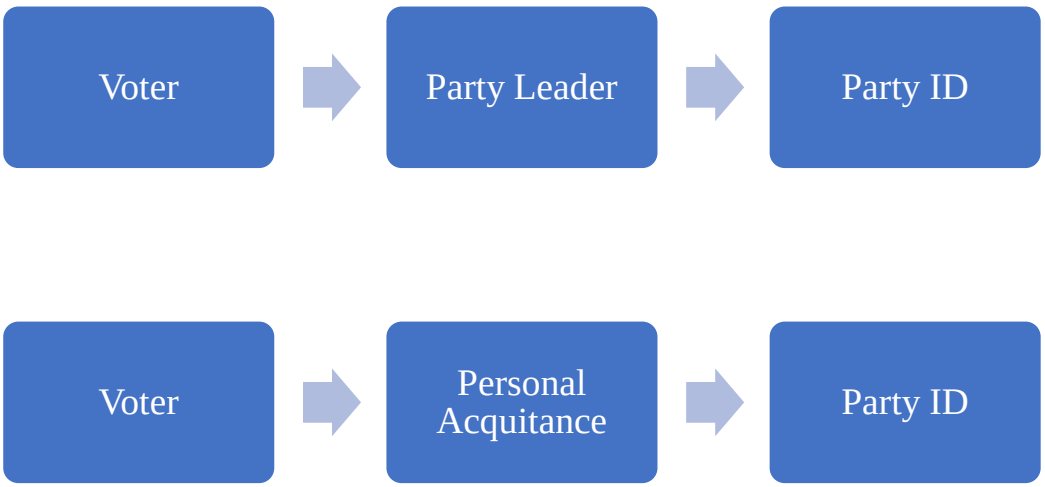
Direction of Future Research

In this dissertation, I traced the vote function of the Armenian and Georgian electorate. The results here extend our understanding of voting behavior, as theorized by SPM, into non-democratic polities with volatile party systems. Although voters in Armenia and Georgia rely on a combination of sociological and psychological behavioral traits when casting a ballot, the results here lead to further questions about political behavior in the post-Soviet region.

First, this study has identified the relationship between incumbent partisanship and vote choice. Although voters who identify with either the RPA or Georgian Dream are more likely to vote for that party during an election, my analysis did not investigate the emergence of party identification in the Caucasus. Nor did my study empirically test the process by which political socialization occurs in Armenia and Georgia. Future work may consider analyzing political socialization in the region. Is it driven by agents such as one's family, peers, teacher, events, etc.? Or is the process of political socialization void of any direct influence and instead is primarily driven by charismatic political leaders? In the West, the conventional theory surrounds

the work of Herbert Hyman (1959) who suggested that "political behavior is learned behavior" (Hyman 10) that is transferred from the family and other primary agents. However, in the post-Soviet region parties lack existence beyond a few years. In addition, the prevalence of charismatic politicians, the existence of patronal politics, and the volatility of party systems may relate political socialization with political personalities.

Figure 8.1: Proposed Path of Party Identification in the Post-Soviet region



Second, this study operationalized partisanship through identification with a political organization. In reality, the post-Soviet space is dominant with personality types who create parties and use them as vehicles for their political ambitions. In this sense one's identification with a particular party may come into existence through identification with the party leader. Alternatively, voters in the region may identify with a particular party through a personal acquittances. Here, identification is purely rational and void of any abstract notion of ideology or psychological attachment. Identification primarily occurs because of anticipated material gain.[134]

[134] This can be related to Hale's (2015) discussion of the theory of expectations.

Thus, future research can explore this topic by analyzing whether post-Soviet voters, particularly in the Caucasus, identify with the party leader more so than the party? Or do post-Soviet voters rely on acquittances to identify with a particular party? If it is the latter two, then the type of partisanship present in the region is quite different from what has been documented in the West.

Third, this study analyzed sociological questions present in both surveys. In Appendix B, I include a regression output that is specified to Armenia. One of the main findings is the influence of public employment on incumbent vote intention. In fact, this result strengthens the applicability of patronal politics in the field of voting behavior. Unfortunately, GPAS did not include a question relating to public employment. More importantly, it omitted a question about the respondent's religion. Future surveys and research analyzing the post-Soviet vote can consider the impact of both sociological variables. The rejuvenation of religious practices following the collapse of the Soviet Union has been documented elsewhere (Agadjanian et al. 2017). Whether its impact is felt in the voting booth remains to be seen.

Finally, this study tested the impact of sociological and psychological factors of voting behavior. In the west, scholars have divided these factors into short-term or long-term indicators (see: Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2016). Sociological predictors of the vote as well as party identification are considered long-term forces because their impact rarely changes from election to election. By contrast, issues are considered short-term indicators because the impact of an issue tends to differ from election to election. Future works analyzing political behavior in the post-Soviet region may consider whether sociological indicators and party identification are long-term indicators of the vote and whether the constant salience of the economy categorizes the issue as a long-term determinant of the vote.

Appendix A: Alternative Models for Non-Responses

Table A1: Non-Responses in Armenia			
	DK/RA Omitted	RA Omitted	DK/RA = 1
PS Age	-.12 (.08)	-.07* (.04)	.06 (.04)
Female	.03 (.06)	.01 (.03)	.06* (.03)
Rural	-.07 (.08)	-.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Higher Educated	.02 (.06)	.01 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Employed	.12** (.06)	.07** (.03)	.05 (.03)
Top Quartile HH Income	.02 (.07)	.01 (.04)	-.02 (.05)
Party Identification	1.18*** (.28)	.55*** (.09)	-.70*** (.11)
Economy	.07* (.04)	.04** (.02)	.002 (.03)
Region FE	No	No	No
Clustered SE	No	No	No
Obs.	575	878	1,059
LR Chi^2	291.10***	349.04***	86.78***
Wald Chi^2			
Pseudo R^2	.45	.45	.06

Note: In the first trial, the dependent variable is RPA vote intention. The sample omits 'don't know' and 'refused to answer' responses. In the second trial, the dependent variable is RPA vote intention. The sample includes 'don't know' responses but omits 'refused to answer'. In the third trial the dependent variable is respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'refused to answer' in the vote intention question. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.
*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Table A2: Non-Responses in Georgia			
	DK/RA Omitted	RA Omitted	DK/RA = 1
PS Age	-.13* (.08)	-.07*** (.02)	-.03 (.03)
Female	.08* (.05)	.01 (.01)	.003 (.02)
Rural	.07 (.05)	-.002 (.01)	.07*** (.02)
Higher Educated	.12*** (.05)	.02 (.01)	-.004 (.02)
Employed	.05 (.05)	-.004 (.01)	.04** (.02)
Top Quartile HH Income	.08 (.08)	.02 (.02)	-.01 (.03)
Party Identification	1.16*** (.06)	.31*** (.02)	-.35*** (.02)
Economy	.15*** (.03)	.04*** (.01)	.02 (.01)
Region FE	No	No	No
Clustered SE	No	No	No
Obs.	1,832	3,564	4,076
LR Chi^2	1,602.17***	1,983.77***	281.80***
Wald Chi^2			
Pseudo R^2	.66	.57	.05

Note: In the first trial, the dependent variable is Georgian Dream vote intention. The sample omits 'don't know' and 'refused to answer' responses. In the second trial, the dependent variable is Georgian Dream vote intention. The sample includes 'don't know' responses but omits 'refused to answer'. In the third trial the dependent variable is respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'refused to answer' in the vote intention question. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for 'employed' is all respondents who are not employed (including retired, students, unemployed, etc.). The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.

*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

Appendix B: Country-Specific Regression Output

Table A3: Determinants of Voting Behavior in Armenia		
	(I)	(II)
PS Age	-.10* (.06)	-.06** (.03)
Female	-.03 (.04)	.01 (.02)
Rural	-.05 (.05)	-.02 (.03)
Higher Educated	.05 (.05)	-.002 (.02)
Employed	---	---
Private Employment	---	.03 (.02)
Public Employment	.13*** (.05)	.20** (.08)
Top Quartile HH Income	-.03 (.05)	.01 (.03)
Party Identification	.54*** (.12)	.37*** (.05)
Prospective-Egotropic	.05* (.03)	.02 (.02)
Retrospective-Sociotropic	.04 (.02)	.05*** (.01)
Region FE	No	No
Clustered SE	No	No
Obs.	455	1,059
LR Chi^2	195.10***	391.30***
Wald Chi^2		
Pseudo R^2	.47	.47

Note: Dependent variable is RPA vote intention. The first trial includes all employed respondents. The public employment covariate is coded as a '1' if the respondent works for the national or local government and '0' if they do not. The second trial includes the entire sample. The 'employed' covariate is coded as '1' for unemployed respondents; '2' for privatively employed respondents; '3' for publicly employed respondents. The omitted reference category is unemployed respondents. Output is marginal effects. The omitted reference category for 'college educated' is all respondents without a college degree. The omitted reference category for "top quartile HH income" is all respondents in the 80 percentile of household income.

*** ≤ .01; ** ≤ .05; * ≤ .10

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Yemelianova, Galina. 2014. “Islam, Nationalism and State in the Muslim Caucasus.” *Caucasus Survey* 1(2): 3-23.

Curriculum Vitae

RAFAEL OGANESYAN
Rafael.oganesyan19@gmail.com
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 S. Maryland Pkwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89154

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Political Science, 2019 (expected)
M. A., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Political Science, 2014
B. A., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Political Science, 2010
B. A., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Economics, 2008

TEACHING EXPERIENCE & RESEARCH DUTIES

Instructor-of-record, Department of Political Science — 2016 – present
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS
PSC 403L: Morality Policy (S-2018)
PSC 231: International Relations (S-2018)
PSC 211: Comparative Politics (F-2017)
PSC 101: Introduction to American Politics (F-2016; F-2017)

Teaching Assistant, Department of Political Science — 2016 – present
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS
PSC 405J: European Integration (S-2018)
PSC 401F: Public Opinion and Political Behavior (F-2017)
PSC 101: Introduction to American Politics (F-2016; F-2017)

Research Assistant (Evaluating Public Officials Project), — 2014 – 2016
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS
National Science Foundation Grant (SES 1354544)
Department of Political Science

Teaching Assistant, Department of Political Science — 2013 – 2014
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS
PSC 702: Advanced Quantitative Methods

PUBLICATIONS

2018 Henceroth, Nathan and Rafael Oganesyan. 2018. “Do EU Structural Funds Have an Effect on French EP Elections?” Forthcoming in *French Politics.*

2016 Gill, Rebecca D. and Rafael Oganesyan. 2016. "The Ideal Judge: How Implicit Bias Shapes Assessment of State Judges." *The Romanian Judges Forum Review*, Issue 2. pp. 75-98

CONFERENCE PAPERS & RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

2017 “Pre-Electoral Coalitions and Accountability Avoidance.” (With Christian Jensen) Presented at the 2017 American Political Science Association annual meeting in San Francisco, CA. Aug. 31 – Sept. 3, 2017.

2017 “Compelled Voters and Accountability in Australia” (With Christian Jensen). Presented at the 2017 Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting in Chicago, IL. April 6-9, 2017.

2017 “Expanding the Economic Vote: Foreign Aid and Electoral Performance” (With Aaron Coates). Presented at the 2017 Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting in Chicago, IL. April 6-9, 2017.

2017 “Multidimensional Economic Voting in Australia: Valence and Patrimonial” Presented at the 2017 Southern Political Science Association annual meeting in New Orleans, LA. January 12-14, 2017.

2016 “The Emergence of Economic Voting in European Parliamentary Elections” (With Nathan Henceroth). Presented at the 2016 American Political Science Association annual meeting in Philadelphia, PA. September 1-4, 2016

2016 “Does Economic Voting Extend to those Living Abroad? Exploring Whether Expatriates are Economic Voters” (With Hafthor Erlingsson). Presented at the 2016 Midwest Political Science Association annual conference in Chicago, Illinois. April 7-10, 2016.

2016 “Does Economic Voting Extend to those Living Abroad? Exploring Whether Expatriates are Economic Voters” (With Hafthor Erlingsson). Presented at the 2016 International Studies Association annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia. March 16-19, 2016.

2016 "The Eurasian Development Bank: Enhancing Socio-Economic Development or Extending Russo Neo-Imperialism?" Presented at the 2016 International Studies Association in Atlanta, Georgia. April 9-11, 2016.

2015 **"**Leading Horses to Water: Compulsory Voting and Economic Voting" (with Christian Jensen). Presented at the 2015 American Political Science Association annual meeting in San Francisco, CA. September 3-6, 2015.

2015 "Economic Perceptions and Political Trust in the Caucasus." Presented at the Caucasus Research Resource Center (Armenia Branch) in Yerevan, Armenia. June 5, 2015.

2015 "Do EU Structural Funds Have an Effect on French EP Elections?" (with Nathan Henceroth). Presented at the 2015 Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois. April 16-19, 2015.

2015 "Economic Perceptions and Presidential Trust in the Caucasus." Presented at the 2015 Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois. April 16-19, 2015.

2015 "Economics and the Vote: Evidence from Asia." Presented at the 2015 Southwestern Social Science Association Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado. April 9-11, 2015.

2015 "Egotropic Voting Revisited: Evidence from Latin America and Africa." Presented at the 2015 Western Political Science Association annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. April 2-4, 2015.

2015 **"**The Ideal Judge: How Implicit Bias Shapes Assessment of State Judges." (with Rebecca Gill). Presented at the 2015 Western Political Science Association annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. April 2-4, 2015.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

2017 Project initiator, *Armenian Election Study (ArmES)*. First election survey in the Republic of Armenia. March 18th 2017 to March 31st 2017.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

2015 Qualitative Methods Seminar, Yerevan State University (May 21, 2015)
- Qualitative Data Analysis using NVIVO
  - With Arpine Porsughyan

2015 Arizona Methods Workshop, University of Arizona (January 8-10, 2015)
- Qualitative Data Analysis in ATLAS.ti
  - With Dr. Corey Abramson
- Qualitative Comparative Analysis
  - With Dr. Claude Rubinson

AWARDS

2016 The Gulbenkian Foundation Short-Term research grant for ArmES ($2,000)

2016 UNLV GPSA Travel Research Grant ($900)

2015 UNLV Access Grant ($2,000)

2015 Awarded 1st place for presentation "Economic Perceptions and Presidential Trust in the Caucasus" (Session E) - UNLV Graduate and Professional Students Association-Sponsored Annual Research Forum ($200)

2015 UNLV GPSA Travel Research Grant ($1,200)

2014 UNLV Access Grant ($2,000)

2014 Graduate & Professional Student Association Book Grant ($100)

2014 Department of Political Science Travel Grant

2013 UNLV Access Grant ($2,000)

ACADEMIC & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2017 GPSA representative to the School of Nursing (SON) Dean Search Committee
- Met prospective dean candidates at UNLV and provided brief campus tour; conducted skype interviews of potential candidates with the entire search committee

2016 College of Liberal Arts representative to the GPSA sponsorship committee
- Tasked with GPSA funding approval towards graduate student research

2016 College of Liberal Arts representative to the Student Technology Advisory Board (STAB)

- Successfully lobbied for 24/7 computer lab on campus

2015 Southwest Social Science Association

- Discussant in Paper Session: Comparative Political Institutions: Comparative Politics of Institutions

2015 Scholarship and Fellowship Committee Member during the 2014-2015 academic year

- Evaluated over two hundred applicants for various graduate scholarships in excess of $100,000.

2015 Political Science Representative to the Graduate and Professional Students Association

2014 Political Science Representative to the Graduate and Professional Students Association

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP (Initial Year)

2016 Member of the Southern Political Science Association

2015 Member of the American Political Science Association

2015 Member of the Midwest Political Science Association

2014 Student Affiliate of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA)